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THE
GERANIUM LADY

SYLVIA CHATFIELD BATES

1. Fiction; American

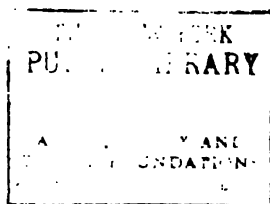


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THE GERANIUM LADY



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[See page 37

"JUNE CARVER SAT QUIETLY NOT FAR FROM HAWTHORNE."

THE GERANIUM LADY

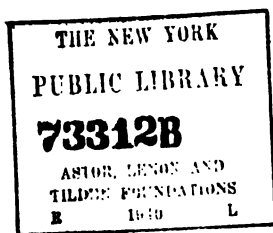
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THE GERANIUM LADY

THE GERANIUM LADY

CHAPTER I

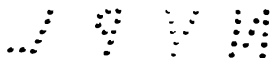
THE OPENING OF THE BEACH

THERE is an island on the Atlantic coast, somewhere between Penobscot Bay and Barnegat, where wild roses grow by the roadside from May until August, where crimson ramblers smother the gables of the tiny gray-shingled houses, and where the greenest of lanes thread in and out of wind-blown oaks. An old-fashioned town is at one end of this island; at the other a strange hamlet struggles along a peninsula, to the lighthouse that tops high gay cliffs; the open sea pounds the south shore. And about two miles in from that lonely beach snuggles the village of Bridgewater. A series

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of salt-water ponds and coves lies between it and the sea. Between them and the sea is the beach, a tawny sand strip choking what should be the mouth of a bay. It is a narrow defence indeed from the ocean's onslaught.

Bridgewater, sleeping in the sun, usually out of sound and sight of this tumult, curves around Town Cove and looks seaward. Beyond it, and beyond the still, grove-girted inlet known as Deep Bottom, are beautiful downs. Here sheep wander in the green-carpeted road. If you follow the sheep you come at length to the last grove of all, upon the edge of which, close by Great Pond, stands Long Point Farm house, a level plain between it and the sea. In every room of this gray old shell can be heard on the quietest day the steady murmur of surf. And when the waves rise, and the tide sweeps in, comes an uproar audible far up the coves,—at the Betty Latch Cottage. No one knows just how long the hoary house has been here by the sea, shaken by winter gales, weathered by rain and sun. But like the Island itself it mellows and smiles under eternal buffetings. Like the



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Island it knows the "beauty and the terror of the world."

One day in June—a brilliant morning when there seemed, on Long Point, to be more blue sky and water in the world than anything else—Lieutenant Miles Hawthorne, U.S.N., formerly of the battleship *Alaska*, sat on the veranda of Long Point Farm house smoking his pipe. It was a breezy morning with whitecaps on the Great Pond; and beyond the Beach, queerly above it, flashing white waves leaped now and then, against the glimpse of blue that was the sea. Miles Hawthorne knew they were there, because two persons had said so. The shaded porch was breezy and cool, the pipe fragrant, but he had nearly decided to leave both and walk to the Beach without waiting for Captain Madison when the sound of a squeaking wheel and the deliberate flop-flop of huge hoofs told of the approach of the old sailor who had recently come to be this young man's intimate friend. As Captain Madison drove into the yard, Hawthorne went to meet him.

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In the dusty buggy that sagged sidewise with his weight sat a powerful old man with a face like St. Peter, except for the whimsical light-blue eyes that never belonged to any saint. He wore a faded blue suit that carried deposits of sand in its intimate creases; his speckled necktie was gay. Taking off his straw hat, browned with the sun, he ran enormous fingers through his thick gray hair, and nodded at the man who stood with his hand on the carriage wheel.

"We're openin' the Beach today," he said briefly. "You better come down."

Miles Hawthorne laughed—he had a pleasant laugh that people liked to hear, and a lean strong face that was good to look at, in spite of a scarred forehead and clouded gray eyes.

"I've been waiting for you, sir," he answered, with the deference the old man loved. "Five wagons and a buggy have passed this morning, on the Beach road! I'm flattered at having been urged to go in all but the buggy. I'm awfully glad to see you!"

"So? Are ye?"

"I guess you know about how glad!"

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Captain Madison looked seaward. Men who live on the ocean or by it have a habit of long pauses with steady gaze searching the horizon, of brief speech to the point.

"I'll drive ye to the Beach if ye want to go," was his only answer.

It had been a good many years since anyone had dreamed of living at Long Point Farm. The old house had stood unaltered and empty. Even in summer it was considered too far away from the village to be desirable, though with May the Point became a paradise; the great salt pond on the west, and on the south and east the ocean. Then one spring the workmen who drew seaweed from the Beach had been amazed to see a stranger, an "off-islander," walking on the downs. Unknown to everyone the lonely house had been rented. And the new tenant was not, apparently, mad. He was merely a tall slender man, singularly erect against the fastest gale, who walked swiftly, and when one drew quite near him, smiled. He had a scar on his forehead not yet old; but it was not that which made him unforgettable.

Captain Madison's rickety buggy swayed off behind the mare's stately jog. Miles Hawthorne was always fascinated by the respectability of her gait, combined with a ponderous attempt at lightness that lifted the loose harness at every step, and seemed like elderly coquetry. Sally followed without guidance the faint road toward the low thunder of the Beach. Everywhere there were wild roses and blue-eyed grass, but Hawthorne had good reason to prefer the wide sweep of water and the arched sky, where huge white clouds, sailing rapidly, emphasized the infinite distance. They looked like full-rigged ships. He liked the buffet of the salt wind that carried in elusive whiffs, when it shifted, the sweetness of spice-bushes. He was keenly glad today to be in this blue and green and pale yellow world. Narrowly to have escaped leaving it, with appalling speed, does not tend to lessen its beauty.

Captain Madison glanced now and then at his companion and twitched the reins upon Sally's mild back. With the simple tact of the true Islander, he had tried to make the stranger

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one of themselves. Hawthorne met one of the sidelong glances smilingly.

"Do you know, I feel as if the Atlantic Ocean were in my front yard down here!" he exclaimed.

"Not yet it ain't," said the skipper. "But we're goin' to open the front gate an' let him in."

"'Open the Beach,' the men said! I pretended to understand." Again the young man gave his low and pleasant laugh.

"A genuine sailor," replied the skipper comfortingly, "don't hang around beaches much. He keeps outer their way. Ye've seen the narrowest part o' the Beach, I cal'late. Ye do considerable walkin'."

"Between the Great Pond and the sea?"

"Yes. Wal', the Pawnd is fed by the coves and the coves by brooks. They was meant in the natur' o' things to empty into the sea. But the sea is allays contrary. I guess ye know that! Wal', the tide washes sand into the Pawnd faster'n the Pawnd kin empty. Forms a beach clean across the mouth. There's a law makes us empty it out several times a year."

"Do you work at it, too?" asked the off-islander, surprised.

"I sort o' set 'em an example," said Captain Madison.

As the mare jogged on, they drew near the ocean. It had been opening out before them, but was now withdrawn behind the sand-dunes, which rose higher than the road. Its presence beyond them, invisible yet close and clamoring, was tremendous.

"Waves 're runnin' a mite high," remarked the Captain, as a white forked thing leaped above the ridge.

Then, when they toiled through a break in the dunes, the ocean unfolded—dark blue, strongly tossing, flying with foam as a choppy sea rapidly rolled in. Miles Hawthorne lifted his head quickly. A thoroughbred does that at a glimpse of the curved course.

Just then a man on a mule, whom they had not heard behind them, pushed past without speaking and galloped down the hard beach. The slight incident served to cover Hawthorne's silence.

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"Humph!" Captain Madison grunted. "Jim Brant never did hev any manners. But what kin ye expect?"

"Brant?" asked the young man absently. "Do I know him?"

"I don't believe ye ever seen him before. He works at Bijah's farm up at the Cove. Dark man. He's a half-breed, part Portugee an' part Indian. Story goes he has some white blood way back, a gentleman's, too."

Miles Hawthorne at last turned away from the sea.

"That combination should make something strange!"

"Oh, yes. Jim's queer. I cal'late he's never be'n quite domesticated yet. He has spells o' sorter—wildness!"

They had reached the narrowest strip of the Beach, where the Great Pond, a lake of considerable size, lies on the right, the ocean on the left. Here one is between two vast waters; and here the work of cutting a channel was under way.

A sea wind, mingled with spray, blew across

the sand strip. Gulls wheeled above the tall Islanders as they gravely worked. About this beach-opening there was, somehow, a slow and epic dignity.

The method was primitive and leisurely. The Islanders were employed with small wooden shovels hitched behind horses, like plows, and at each slow trip between pond and sea a very small quantity of sand was scooped out. One man drove yoked oxen. The red beasts lurched into the breakers, rearing their heads against the greenish combs.

The gathering was fairly representative of the Cove. So one speaks, on the Island, of the settlement about the inlet named after old Bijah Baxter. Henry Pelham Poole was there, owner of a fleet of porgy-boats often to be seen skirting the south coast. Deacon Jotham Torrey could be seen in hip boots digging with a coal-shovel. Captain Seavey owned and drove the oxen. These three leaders of the enterprise were assisted by their sons and nephews and hired men. The half-breed had been sent down by Bijah Baxter, who was too

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old to come. Captain Madison greeted them, being careful to call those by name who were known to Hawthorne.

The wide blue carts stood about on the Beach, and there was another buggy, its horse hunched patiently over an iron weight. Passing close as he helped to unbuckle Sally, Lieutenant Hawthorne was surprised to see, lying on the seat, a woman's scarlet cloak. Captain Madison did not seem to notice it.

The Islanders had not expected the officer of the *Alaska* to join in their work, but they were pleased when as a matter of course he did so. They had a tremendous respect for his calling, and also for what had happened to him in it.

"By jings!" whispered Joth Torrey, nephew of the deacon. "It's just as if he'd got it in a war! Blake says he had a chance to run, and didn't."

"Do you know why he didn't?" asked Young Seavey.

"No."

"He was too busy yankin' a couple of middies out of the way."

At that the half-breed paused in the work he had just begun. Jim Brant had a mighty frame, even for the Island, and a strange, dark, passionate face. He turned, now, and looked across the narrow ditch at the man from that other world, "off-island," who was hurrying to put on somebody's hip boots and laughing as he talked in ready intimacy with Captain Seavey.

"Did he do—*that?*" The rough question almost startled Joth Torrey.

"Yes."

"God!" whispered Jim Brant.

And oddly enough Miles Hawthorne had just said to Captain Madison: "I think I shall have to know this man, Brant."

With the new-comers the work progressed more rapidly. The cut deepened and widened. Into it the eager foremost waves swirled; while the Pond stood full, ready to meet its destiny. The gulls still wheeled low in the scudding spray. Then, at last, the water from the Great Pond went rushing into the sea. It would have been a dreadful mill-race in a wider channel, And with it came myriads of fish,

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literally filling the cut. The men, stopping work, picked their dinner out of the water and let it flop and die upon the sand.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Hawthorne to the man next him, not noticing who he was. "Why doesn't somebody come down here with barrels and box 'em up? You could salt a car-load and get rich!"

The dark man lifted his eyes.

"I used ter tell ole Bijah that every time we cut this channel. It's his beach, his'n an' Henry Pelham Poole's. But they don't want the bother!"

Hawthorne looked into the dark man's face.

"Aren't you Jim Brant?" he asked, smiling.

"Yes,—sir. . . ."

But Captain Madison interrupted. He had been looking earnestly down the Beach as if he might perhaps be sighting a sail to windward, and had suddenly decided to go home.

"Will you come to Long Point to see me some day?" Hawthorne delayed to ask.

"Yes, sir," said Jim Brant again; "I'll come!"

Having said good-bye to Captain Seavey, who appeared to be host of the odd occasion, Miles Hawthorne followed Captain Madison's blue figure. The other buggy and the patient horse, he noticed, still stood rooted in the sand. But the scarlet cloak had blown upon the ground. He picked it up.

"Whose is this?" he asked the skipper, holding it out, conscious of a faint sweetness. "It certainly doesn't belong to the men. And I haven't seen any lady."

"Wal', no," the Captain drawled. "I don't know as it would be exactly becomin' to Jotham Torrey."

"Is it a mystery?" the young man laughed.

"I guess there ain't much mystery about it. It looks to me as if that there cloak belonged to the Geranium Lady."

"And who is she?"

"Wal'," repeated the old man, fumbling in his enormous pockets and looking up at Miles Hawthorne with twinkling blue eyes, "I dun'no' as I kin tell ye hand over hand, so to speak. But I cal'late she's comin' right here to talk fer herself."

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Coming here! A "geranium lady"! He had heard that a young woman called that lived in the Betty Latch Cottage in Bijah's Cove.

Hawthorne wheeled quickly. Certainly there were two figures approaching, figures in blowing skirts; but to him, though they were not far off, they were very vague in outline. He frowned.

"Jest ye wait a bit," said Captain Madison gently.

The figures were talking and laughing together, and suddenly the slim one gave a little cry. The straw hat she had been swinging on its ribbon had been caught by a gust of wind. It mounted into the air and whirled away. She stood still, laughing now; and when she saw one of the men by the channel dash after the hat, waited for him to bring it to her.

He came running over the sand in long easy leaps. Captain Madison saw that it was the half-breed, Jim Brant. When he reached her side he held out the hat without a word.

"Oh, thank you," came a clear and beautiful

voice that belonged to the figure in white; Hawthorne knew by the sound that the lips curved in a smile. "How quickly you ran! I'm glad—because I like that hat."

He saw that Jim Brant stood looking after her as she turned away. . . .

With the first note of her voice, it began! He had not known such things were possible! For as she spoke there flooded over him a mighty tide of sensation—vivid experience. . . . He was not standing on a beach by the windy sea, but living through, in a moment that was an eternity, an hour he had meant to forget. . . . Forget! When with all the horror had been a sense of invisible beauty—strangest union, surely, in the whole world! . . .

And Captain Madison was saying:

"Wal', now, seem's if yer belongings was spread all over the lots today. Here's another fellow, *he's* got yer cloak. Sort of a Red Ridin' Hood thing, ain't it?"

The slim figure, that had come straight on through it all, stopped before Hawthorne and looked up at him. If this were the Geranium

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Lady—but why that?—she seemed beautiful. Her face was pale. She had dark eyes. On her head were lengths of fluffy black hair, braided and wound around like a crown. She wore, in her belt, a bunch of sweet flowers—bright scarlet.

“I guess ye don’t know Cap’n Hawthorne,” the old sailor talked on. He would never give the off-islander a lesser title. “He’s goin’ to give up yer cloak in a few minutes!”

He took her hand, and she smiled a little, though even he could see that something was making her go so white. He unconsciously drew her toward him, and Captain Madison feared, for an instant, that he was going to put his hand on her hair!

“But—I have never seen you before!” said Miles Hawthorne.

CHAPTER II

THE SLOOP "SITKA" TAKES A PASSENGER

MILES HAWTHORNE had come down to Long Point because William Blake had told him it was the place where he wanted to be. Few would take the advice of a newly hired secretary on such a matter, but Hawthorne did not care. And it was an entirely new feeling for him—not to care! He had always cared very much; he had lived "three to the minute." But Blake had settled everything, and when his employer had come to the Island he approved. For he loved wide spaces, that being what he was used to. With anchor lifted for—Zanzibar, he had been wont to smile content, and joke midshipmen out of homesickness, and happily count the nearing stars from the bridge at night. If he could not, now, live on the ocean, he wished to live near it. Also he wished

to forget certain matters, whereof a roaring, blinding flame was no small part. He was bent on wiping out, if possible, all the supernumerary horrors that had followed the primal horror of the explosion on the *Alaska*, and on getting used, unobserved by sympathetic friends and his one or two distant relatives, to a new aspect of the world—to landscapes with very uncertain outlines, to books from whose pages the printing had vanished. He had been ordered quiet for a time. So he had rented this Long Point Farm on the recommendation of a colorless young man who, after one interview, fervently desired to be useful. Here William Blake, who indeed read beautifully, earned his salary. And here there were glorious miles of rolling downs to walk over, and a newly mysterious sea. If he were lonely there was only the secretary to guess. And he gave no sign. But it had appeared, suddenly, that the old farm was not so far off after all. The story of the young naval officer had gone abroad, losing nothing as told by Blake and the negro servant, Bone. The villagers, simply cordial,

drove down to the Point, Captain Madison oftenest.

On the way back from the opening of the Beach the old sailor gave the other buggy the right of way, and the mare Sally was soon out-distanced. Captain Madison did all the talking at first, for Hawthorne had not said a word since his extraordinary remark to a white-faced young woman without a hat. And as the Captain rambled on it became apparent that he had lately become rather well acquainted with the girl whom he had whimsically named the Geranium Lady. He seemed to know a good deal about her, although he had never talked much about her before.

She had bought the Betty Latch Cottage in Bijah's Cove that spring, he told the silent man, who was looking earnestly at something between the points of Sally's ears. She had spent several summers of her childhood in the little old house, visiting with her nurse some relatives of the famous Betty Latch herself. Now she came suddenly, no one knew why, and astounded the Covers by saying she

wanted to raise geraniums; moreover, proceeding to do it. There was an acre of them already, blazing in the front yard! It seemed, too, as if she were going to stay, for she had turned the cottage into "the sightliest place out of Devonshire," according to the old skipper. He had gone to England in his seafaring days, and to the amusement of the more practical Islanders dropped anchor at Bideford for the purpose of finding the home of his favorite hero, *Amyas Leigh*.

"She's put in them little windows that open like doors," he explained with curious enthusiasm. "She wants to thatch the roof, too, but nobody here knows how. And the old vines that was dyin'—she's trained 'em up wonderful thick. There were a party here once," snorted the Captain, "who talked of pullin' 'em down and buildin' a smart verandy!"

Hawthorne smiled faintly at the old man's indignation, and spoke for the first time.

"If the house is like the others I've seen here it would have been a desecration!"

"Wal'," reflected Captain Madison, "for my

part I like houses same as I like women-folk—sorter cosy an' sweet."

Lieutenant Hawthorne spoke once more on the homeward drive.

"But for such a cottage there should be a real Devonshire door-yard garden. She raises—geraniums, you say?"

For the rest, the Captain talked all the way to Long Point Farm, without waiting for answers. But there was an extra pucker about his eyes, a puzzled look. He still wore it when he drove away, declining an invitation to dinner.

Miles Hawthorne, officer of the *Alaska*, spent that afternoon walking. He struck across the plains and followed a network of grassy wheel-tracks, hardly to be termed roads, until he came to Takama's Bay, and rested on the shores of it. But he did not think very much, this afternoon, about the Indian girl who had dared its waters in her lover's canoe rather than marry another man. He liked brave drowned Takama—Captain Madison had told him her story—yet she was of no importance today. He lay on the ground by the sparkling water,

going over a thousand times the experiences of the morning. Again and again he seemed to grasp at the explanation of the amazing association. Supersensitiveness after a tremendous shock? The result of a complex mood made acute by unaccustomed work in the wine-like air? How account for the phenomenon? How, for instance, connect the worst hour of his life with this girl in the Betty Latch Cottage? But as often as he seemed to hold the meaning of it all it sank beneath the surface. He walked many miles without being more successful, but when he returned to the Farm, very late for supper, he astounded the agitated Bonaparte by laughing softly twice as he ate alone. And once the negro nearly dropped a plate he was offering, for the young man only stared at it and said:

"Poor little thing! . . . I must have frightened her!"

Her name, Captain Madison had said, was June Carver.

He wondered why she had bought the old cottage on Bijah's Cove. He had passed it

several times without particularly noticing it, though he remembered having been told that a young lady from off-island had renovated it that spring. But his walks did not often take that direction, and when he went to the village it was by sail-boat across Great Pond.

He had never before seen this other off-islander. But now it was only a week after their first meeting that he saw her again.

The June afternoon would have been hot anywhere else, but on the Island there was only a luxurious glow of golden sun with a fresh breeze to relieve it. On the pond agile blue waves made merry. The ocean mumbled, in its indigo depths, about southern islands blazing in scented airs. Miles Hawthorne heard all that it had to say, very plainly, and preferred to keep to his twopenny pond and the *Sitka*.

He had exhausted all the possible occupations by two o'clock. In the morning he did rather queer things with a hoe in his doubtful-looking vegetable garden, while Blake read directions from an agricultural paper, and Bone shook his head in the pantry window. It

seemed to Hawthorne that plotting the course of an insignificant seed until it safely hove to in harbor as a summer squash or a cabbage was a fearful problem of navigation. Then he nearly quarreled with Blake because he could not understand that everything with masts and sails was not necessarily a schooner. And as Bone served the one-o'clock dinner in the enormous old dining-room the sea still muttered at the windows its tale of distant tropical harbors. There was nothing for it but the *Sitka* and the twopenny pond.

The *Sitka* was a beautiful sloop, a racing-boat in her youth, which Hawthorne had bought and renamed. Her sharp prow had cut many waters. It made him smile—sometimes—to think of her now, on Bridgewater Pond! He felt a twinge of sympathy, as if she were human, and compunction, that he had brought her to ignominy. Surely the Great Pond had never before seen anything so graceful as the *Sitka* skimming across its surface on a fresh morning, or dropping slowly down to Long Point by moonlight, gliding, ghostly, marvelously tall.

"Good afternoon, Captain Hawthorne—hot weather we're havin'—Samuel, it isn't polite to stare."

Mrs. Bartlett always said everything in one breath and then stopped as if her stream of speech had been abruptly turned off.

"I'm told it is warm for the Island," Hawthorne replied, smiling reassurance at the scarlet Samuel, who was doing his best to vanish unobserved. "But you wouldn't feel it so much, Mrs. Bartlett, out in the air."

The thin yellow woman hesitated. She glanced around the littered shop and into the back room where she did her unending work.

"I'm too busy for air!" she remarked.

Hawthorne leaned on the counter. He had heard of country women of this type, but he had never seen one. She might almost as well live in a slum, he thought. He wondered what she did in that stuffy back room.

"Mrs. Bartlett, some day I'm coming here to take you off in my boat, to the Beach. I don't believe you've ever even seen the *Sitka*."

"No—I haven't—you're a kind young man."

"Nonsense!"

She raised her eyes and offered an argument.

"I heard what you said to Jim Brant."

"Why—what did I say to him?" Hawthorne was genuinely surprised.

"You asked him to come to Long Point to see you."

"Yes."

"Well—we don't do that—ask him I mean—don't you see?"

"Chiefly curiosity, Mrs. Bartlett, really."

"Don't tell me!"

At that Mrs. Bartlett disappeared behind the shadowy pile into her cavern again. He thought she was going to stay. Samuel, too, had gone. The store was empty, for Mr. Bartlett took the air of an afternoon. But presently Mrs. Bartlett came back. She thrust across the counter a heavy package tied with string. Hawthorne almost dropped it.

"Hope you like apple jell—it's been ready for you a week—if it don't cool off we'll have a tempest this evening."

She would not stay for his thanks, and Haw-

thorne made them in the empty store to the pile of black and blue calico.

He walked down the dusty road toward the post-office with the jelly-glasses under his arm. He was wondering if Jim Brant would come to Long Point, and what on earth they would talk about if he did. Thinking of these things, he turned in at a path edged with clam-shells, and entered the door of a low yellow building.

The tiny hot post-office—it was a new honor to Bridgewater to have a “federal building”—smelled of varnish and dust and ink. The letter-boxes, most of them empty, fairly glittered with sunlight and pride. One expected to see waves of heat rise from them and from the new yellow floor. Here it really was a warm day.

At the counter to the left of the door a dark-haired girl in a white dress stood writing a letter. As Hawthorne entered she bent lower over her paper. She might have seen him from the window as he came up the road.

He took off his hat to the postmistress.

“Anything to-day, Miss Boles?”

Just then the girl at the counter made a large blot.

"Well, I *am* glad you come, Captain Hawthorne," said Miss Boles. "What I should have done I don't know!"

"What's the matter? By the way—you've no authority of promotion, Miss Boles."

"Then Lieutenant. . . I was afraid you wouldn't get to town today, and I hadn't a soul to send it by."

The postmistress put on her spectacles and searched in a pile of papers.

"It?" said Hawthorne.

"It's a telegram—one of those new night letters. It was telephoned over this morning."

Through the little window she handed a yellow paper, crackling, important.

"You may want to send an answer tonight. It's a good thing you come!"

The tall man took the paper, and stood very still. He did not look at it, or at Miss Boles. And all at once the post-office clock began to tick loudly in the little varnished room.

The postmistress peered over her spectacles.

“Any answer?”

Then Hawthorne laughed, a little. He crumpled the paper into his pocket.

“No, thanks. No answer.”

Turning quickly he walked out of the room.

On the steps he almost ran down a girl in white with a scarlet splotch at her belt. It was she who had been writing a letter a moment ago. He stood before her, asking pardon, and all at once saw that it was the girl of the Beach, the Geranium Lady,—June Carver. Then he knew why he had come to Bridgewater today—and waited to hear her voice!

What she said was almost as strange as his own first words to her on the Beach. She stood straight and looked up at him. She was not very tall.

“What if—if it needed an answer?” she said.

If he had expected a repetition of the phenomenon of the Beach it did not come. Perhaps it was swallowed up in another emotion. Her voice was low, and not so much steady itself as steadying. Moreover, it invoked admiration, for there seemed to be courage needed

for her to speak as she did. She held out her hand.

"Won't you—give it to me—Mr. Hawthorne?"

He continued to look down at her without speaking. And she smiled! Then drawing the paper from his pocket slowly, he let her take it, in silence.

Standing in the sunlight on the cramped porch of the village post-office she read out the telegram in a business-like tone. It was not very important, as telegrams go. That is, there was nothing about birth, or death, or even marriage in it. But somehow it was momentous.

"“Orders at last,” she read—and took breath. ““Samoa as we expected. Sailing at once. You know what I wish. Good luck. God bless you. ““HALLECK.””

Hawthorne took the yellow paper again. He almost felt that if he spoke to this girl she would melt away. But he tried the experiment.

"That was a sort of beautiful thing to do!" he said.

At this she appeared to be fulfilling his expectation. He actually caught her arm to keep her from vanishing.

"You see I should have hated not giving old Hal a send off! And tomorrow would have been too late."

Then, without a word she went in with him; and they wrote the answer together.

"A fair voyage," he dictated. And then: "I have found an Island where the people are the kindest in all the world. Perhaps I have stumbled into Heaven instead of 'The Sailors' Rest.' And there is the same old sea." . . .

He found himself strolling down a path beside her, later in the afternoon. They seemed to have been for a walk. He had listened to her tell of Captain Madison's calls, and of the Betty Latch Cottage. He had discovered that her head just topped his shoulder; he had heard her laugh; and had already noticed a little trick she had which later he saw many times—of lifting her chin in a way that seemed valorous, for no particular reason. Now they were crossing the fields toward the wharf on Town

Cove, for she had come that way in her dory, a little blue one, which they found sidling under the *Sitka's* nose.

"You must let me take you down," he said.
"We'll tow the dory."

She stepped into the sloop, and he made her rowboat fast.

"I've got to tack," he explained; and without asking permission she took charge of the jib.

So, very slowly, they crept out of Town Cove, the low sun painting the *Sitka's* sails, changing the waves to green splotched with yellow. No other boat was on the widening water. There was no sound but the gentle hiss of spray occasionally dashed aside, the lurch of the boom as they tacked, and the forlorn bleat of a sheep astonished when the tall sloop made an angle close to the shore. With lazy majesty the *Sitka* moved on across her own shadow out into the Great Pond.

June Carver sat quietly not far from Hawthorne. He was very glad that she had taken off her hat. The sun lighted her face and blazed on the flowers in her belt.

They did not say much to each other. But once, with a swift look across the water at the thin yellow line of sand which was all that kept the *Sitka* from the sea, she asked:

"Why did you put her in here? Why not sail on the ocean?"

"There is no harbor," he explained. "You can't land for fifteen miles on that coast." Then he leaned forward.

"Miss Carver—I want to ask you something, rather queer. May I?"

With the oddest curve of her mouth she looked up at the tall sail, now faintly reddening in the first shaft of sunset.

"Yes," she said gently.

"*Have* I seen you before?"

"No."

Standing up she pointed.

"This is Clam Cape. You can't go up the Cove in this boat, Mr. Hawthorne. You must put me out here."

He brought the blue dory alongside and helped her into it. Then as the space between

them widened he stood bareheaded, watching her. She waved her hand.

"I'm coming to thank you," he called across the water.

She did not say anything at all to that. But she waved to him again. He looked after the blue dory long after he had ceased to see it. When he finally sat down, and swung the *Sitka* on her starboard tack, he reflected that she had not said he might come. But neither had she forbidden him.

In resting his hand on the seat he felt something under it,—a geranium blossom that must have dropped from her belt. He threw it overboard. A red geranium was oddly linked with an important event in his life.

CHAPTER III

THE GERANIUM LADY OF BLJAH'S COVE

WHEN Captain Madison had called the Betty Latch Cottage "the sightliest place out of Devonshire" he did not go far wrong. The Island had many quaint houses, but this one, by something indefinable, captured your heart.

It stood facing the Cove in a gentle hollow that offered itself like a beautiful shallow bowl to the sky. Set back from the road in its own grassy acres, it was sheltered on one side by a grove of oaks; on the other the meadow sloped ever so little to a sliding brook. The little house, of greenish shingles that seemed at a distance to be mossy, was tangled to the low eaves of its steep-slanting roof with honeysuckle, clematis, and woodbine. It was topped squarely in the center by a stalwart chimney, and out of the roof peered two pointed dormers.

This was the very house for a door-yard garden of foxgloves, larkspur, sweet-william, and Canterbury bells, but instead there blazed in the sunlight the strangest substitute. For spread out in the front yard before the cottage, vivid, almost startling, was an acre of scarlet geraniums. Their sweet scent always hung in the air.

On the afternoon after Lieutenant Hawthorne had received a telegram in the Bridge-water post-office, and sent an answer to it there, June Carver was in her strange garden, pretending to work. There was really nothing to do for the sturdy plants, but she went among them solicitously. Here a dried leaf might need plucking, or there a plant be ready to slip. And the huge mature blooms must be mercilessly culled for the good of the stock. With deft hands the girl gave her services, bending her dark head over the masses of color, actually looking anxious if she found anything wrong. Her eyes had tender lights in them, set there as a beautiful beacon for all men, and things, too, it would seem. For what could there be in a field of flowers to kindle that glow?

She worked steadily, as if from habit, without looking up.

The scarlet garden was very quiet. The oak leaves rustled a little with a breeze that floated in from the water. The Cove itself stretched away in glassy smoothness toward Clam Cape, beyond which the Great Pond lay shining far off. There was a murmur in the air, scarcely to be heard unless one listened for it, slumberous but never ending, coming from beyond the calm inner waters. One remembered, even in the peaceful Cove, the eternally talking sea. There had been, the night before, the "tempest" Mrs. Bartlett had prophesied—a thunderstorm. Any weather disturbance on the Island is called by that violent word. But all that remained was the dull boom of the subsiding surf. The third sound in the garden was the girl's humming.

Presently she rose from where she had knelt and stood looking down the Cove. Often, lately, there had been a tall sail on Bridgewater Great Pond. It would appear just beyond Clam Cape, pass by the mouth of the Cove, and be

hidden behind a low rise of land. Sometimes it moved slowly, with a forlorn and drooping grace, but on windy days it would come scudding by, bending low, hardly visible before it was gone. The girl rarely missed seeing it. When the calm was prolonged she looked anxious, but with a strong fresh breeze she smiled. There had been no sail today.

She turned her back on the Cove.

"Hannah," she called. "Oh, Hannah!"

Around the corner of the house a woman of fifty hurried tolerantly, and gazed with affectionate inquiry at the young woman in the midst of the scarlet mass. Somewhat military in appearance, yet with kind eyes, and a humorous nose, she appeared to be perpetually forearmed against disconcerting surprises.

"Yes, ma'am," she briefly remarked.

"I'm not going after the mail today, Hannah. I'm—tired. Why don't you put on that lovely shade hat you bought in Boston, and go yourself? You would enjoy the walk."

"I'll go. But the wild Injun will probably bring it," said Hannah.

44 THE GERANIUM LADY

"You know very well he isn't wild at all!" the girl laughed. "And he's only part Indian."

"Pretty large part, I guess!"

"What makes you hate that man so, Hannah?" June Carver spoke curiously. "I could see you did when he caught my hat. And you didn't like it a bit when he set out our hedge. It isn't kind of you to despise him."

"I can put up with 'most anything," declared Hannah, "but wild Injuns. There I draw the line."

"Of course people think he's queer. I shouldn't think he could help being! But—but, Hannah, there's a—a man, another off-islander, down at Long Point Farm, who likes him. That's what people say."

"What's that to us?"

"I—I was just going to tell you that we—we don't want to get to depend on Jim Brant just because he has offered to do things. And—and I really thought you would like the walk into town today."

"Well, I would," said Hannah calmly; "only

there ain't any use pretendin' I'm goin' for the mail."

Smiling at the uncompromising honesty of Hannah, June Carver at last left her brilliant garden. There was a hammock in the grove of oaks, and in it she curled up luxuriously. It swung gently in the slight breeze. The distant murmur was soothing. She lay looking up through the foliage at the patches of sky.

It seemed like a great many years since Hannah had brought her, one summer, to this Island, to this very grove of oaks, and had told her legends about old Betty Latch and her famous hens whose tombstones at this moment stood outside the dining-room door. The visit had been a short one and the cottage had been empty for years since, so that it was not at all strange that nobody remembered her and Hannah now. Even then she had confided in Hannah's unsympathetic ear that she intended to buy the house some day. But after that, in the kaleidoscope years, she had completely forgotten it. For life had been full for her, because she herself had eagerly made it full.

She had never been content to buy her pictures "penny plain," but had paid for "twopence colored" every time. Why this tiny old house, and the whole wind-swept fragrant Island, with its quiet detachment from life that only enhanced the effect of its nearness to things plain and universal, should have risen in her memory just when it did she had never asked. She had merely wished passionately to go somewhere where she had been a little girl. And her whole soul had gone into the delightful labor of making the old Betty Latch house what it should be—and of raising geraniums. She did not mind being thought eccentric. She liked her simple neighbors and believed that they were beginning to like her. For had she not exchanged preserve receipts with Mrs. Bartlett,—and been urged by more than one to go to the opening of the Beach? In fact, Captain Madison had made quite a point of it, she thought. Till then she had kept very close to her house in the Cove. She had seen few people, and had heard very little about the tenant of Long Point Farm.

The hammock in the quiet grove swung on monotonously, while a woodpecker, hammering away at a tree near by, eyed it with curiosity.

By and by Hannah came forth, gowned in green polka dots and the shade hat from Boston. She walked up the dusty road as if she were very glad of her outing. She was a dear soul, but really uncomfortably honest. And as the hammock swayed slightly the hem of a white skirt just brushing the grass, a slim hand, strong but delicate, hung down. There was drowsiness over grove and garden. . . .

Miles Hawthorne had set out to walk from Long Point to Bijah's Cove. The way lay through low-arching green lanes of dwarf oaks. As aisles of tall elms on the mainland remind one of Gothic cathedrals, these miniature forest paths seemed to Hawthorne like some low-roofed village church in old Norman. Carpeted with fine thick grass, the lanes were pervaded with a greenish light flecked with yellow, and were silent, except for the crackle of a stick now and then and the call of a wood thrush. The road led by Deep Bottom, the smallest of the three

coves; the whole vicinity was called by that name. Yet there was really a variety of routes on account of the interlacing pathways. He came to many open spaces and flowery hollows, one named Cæsar's Field because of its long-dead possessor by right of staked-out claim if not by law. But he took what a sailor's instinct for direction told him to be the shortest way.

At last at Bijah's Cove he found that Captain Madison was right. There nestled the cottage, looking as if it yearned to be thatched, and before it the ground burned scarlet. To Hawthorne it appeared that someone had spread down a great red velvet mantle upon which a lady might walk with dry feet when she came out of her house. He found the path past it, and knocked at the low front door.

He knocked twice, but there was no sound from within. The windows that Captain Madison admired stood opened outward. He saw crisp white ruffles at them, and what looked like—yes, they were—rows of little pots. A bee droned somewhere near, and its voice was all

that answered him. She was evidently not at home. He had not said he would come the very next day. Probably she had not thought he would come so soon. In the back of his mind there was the undeniable recollection that she had not said he could come at all! Well, he would have the walk back for his pains. But, he reflected, on the step of the tiny cottage,—his head reached the top of the first-floor windows,—she could scarcely object if he should rest a while in her grove. There was no good place for a long distance on the road back to Deep Bottom. So he carefully skirted the velvet mantle, not daring to find a way across it, and entered the shade of the oaks.

In the splotches of sunlight a hammock was hanging, motionless. Something white brushed the grass. Miles Hawthorne drew near. Then he started, as he did sometimes, now, at a sudden sound. Yet the quiet was unbroken. Her face was turned away from him, but the dark clustering hair could belong only to the girl he had seen on the Beach—who had stood before him catching her breath when she read

out, "Orders at last," who managed the jib of the *Sika*. He took off his hat. . . . She must be asleep or she would have heard his knocking. He was afraid to move lest he should step on a dry stick and waken her. He felt horribly like a guilty trespasser; yet he hoped she would open her eyes. . . . The woodpecker did it. He suddenly began his drilling on a nearer tree, with a hollow, startling knock.

The Geranium Lady tumbled to her feet, somehow, in a great hurry. Her cheeks bloomed in two rose spots; her eyes were very dark. She stared at Hawthorne in amazement that refused to clear for a minute; and this third time that he saw her he found that she was beautiful. He feared to speak at first, knowing that he must be rather alarming as an apparition, but her still look was almost pitiful. So he took one reassuring step forward. Her face swiftly changed, broke into a sweet-curving smile. She uttered one comprehending syllable.

"Oh—" the Geranium Lady remarked.

"You didn't say I couldn't come," began Lieutenant Hawthorne.

"I must have forgotten!" said June.

He stepped back very quickly at that.

"So—as I was passing—I stopped. I didn't—know—you were in the hammock. Now I'll go on. Can I do an errand for you in town?"

"Oh, please—"

"What shall I get? Bartlett's doesn't offer a great variety, but—"

"Oh—*please!* I'm not really awake yet. I didn't mean that! And I didn't mean the other, either! We're terribly mixed up! Can't we—can't we begin all over again?"

"You didn't say I couldn't come—" he said obediently, smiling.

"That was because I hoped you would come," confessed this remarkable girl. "If I hadn't hoped that I probably should have invited you!"

This was still more astonishing, but he was getting used to being surprised. Nothing had ever, so far, turned out as he had expected it. Was life like a dream that it went by contraries?

"I'm awfully sorry to have come blundering

here like this," he went on, "and wakened you. I ought to have gone away, when nobody was at home. I pretended I wanted to rest in your grove, but I wasn't at all tired."

"It was the woodpecker wakened me. How lazy you must think I am!" she exclaimed with actual consternation. "But I'm not, Mr. Hawthorne, really."

He laughed.

"If I wanted any proof of that your garden gives it. You should see mine!"

"What's in yours?" she asked.

"Corn and cabbages!"

They were still confronting each other by the hammock, and the tall man with the scar had not yet stopped looking into the girl's face. The woodpecker continued his knocking; the distant surf murmured; the sun shone down on the old green cottage and upon the extraordinary garden. But now they turned toward it.

"What do you think of mine?" she asked him after their pause.

"Considered just as a garden," he said seri-

ously, "it is probably the only one of the kind in the world. But I suppose you look at it differently. You are a sort of geranium specialist, I understand."

"You might call it that," said the girl.

"It is like the fields of tulips in Holland. I suppose you supply a florist on the mainland?"

"No—I—give them away."

"May I ask who is lucky enough to get them?"

"Why—I—don't think I'll tell you—that!"

She turned around rather hurriedly and searched in the hammock for something she might have left, but nothing was there. Then, coming near, she put her hand on his arm, gently.

"Will you come into my house and see how nice it is?" she said.

So then they went back to the red velvet mantle, following the little path he had not seen, passed the casement windows, and entered the white door. He could hear the bee still humming in the honeysuckle.

He followed her through the tiny house, as,

with a kind of glow about her, she exhibited its rooms. She showed him the living-room first, white painted, low beamed, chintzy, with braided mats on the floor, and a big blackened fireplace containing a crane and an iron pot. The sun was streaming in from the garden, and Hawthorne thought he did not care to go farther; but she led the way into a tiny library stuffed with books, and into a big square cool dining-room that overlooked the meadow and the brook. She even took him into the kitchen and two superior pantries, pointing out rows of aluminum pots and pans and a funny fat teakettle, and bade him look into the smallest ice-chest he had ever seen in his life. He admired everything.

“It’s as clean as a man-of-war,” he said with approval.

She took him back to the dining-room, and with a mysterious expression commanded him to move a chair and a rug. Then she opened a trap door in the floor!

“That,” she said, “is New South Wales!”

“Jolly. But why do you call it so? I should

think a better name was the Black Hole of Calcutta."

"Because Betty Latch called it that."

She promised him the story later, and they went back to the chintzy living-room, where the sunlight still slanted through the open windows; and Hawthorne manœuvered so that she sat in it. Leaning his elbow on her center-table, he unconsciously fingered the magazines. Then he wondered why this Geranium Lady, with the sun on her, looked so queer.

"You surely don't live here alone?" he asked.

"I have Hannah."

"Who's Hannah? What sort of a protector is she?"

"She's as good as a cavalry troop," June laughed. Then she sobered. "I really love Hannah. She was my mother's servant almost all of her life. Now she's mine—but much more."

"Tell me some more about her," he said, adding,—“and you.”

She smiled over at him.

"Well—for one thing she's so pugnacious that

I don't know what will happen if she comes back and finds you here!"

This again was surprising.

"I'll undertake the engagement."

"You see she thinks of me chiefly as my mother's baby! She has always taken care of me, so it is natural enough. And since I've been out of knee dresses I've been constantly scandalizing her. But she says nothing will ever surprise her again."

"I think I like her!" said Hawthorne.

"You would. . . . It is only that she can't understand—things."

The clear voice by the window hesitated. She leaned back out of the sun, deliberately, he guessed, reflecting that she had soon measured his limitation. He was quick to catch a new note in her voice. And he divined the whimsical impulse that made her say, now, what she did in answer to his quiet question:

"What things?"

"When I was a very small girl," she extraordinarily confided, "I didn't like to walk in parks."

"Didn't you? Queer little thing."

"It's funny; I loved crowded streets and roar and work and excitement—with lots of color, or else the open country; I mean woods and sea."

"Without a single swan boat?"

"Yes. I simply refused to play in parks. Hannah liked them, so there was always an argument."

"I'll wager you got your own way."

She nodded. "So you see that is one of the things she couldn't understand."

"There were others?"

"Poor Hannah! It's so long ago. I used to make her take me to the queerest places. Over to the wharfs to watch steamers unload!"

"You went—*where*?"

"To the piers to see the ships. The farther they had come the longer I wanted to stay. I remember once we saw one from Calcutta. I didn't sleep that night, and Hannah thought I was sick—but I wasn't. When she wouldn't take me to the wharfs we went to the Battery. I was willing to sit on a bench there, to watch

the boats go by. But there was nobody to tell me where they were bound."

She stopped quickly because Hawthorne, suddenly rising, went to the window and stood looking out. There was a silence in which she seemed to expect him to speak. Finally he did.

"Hannah wouldn't understand!" he said.

She mused in the shadow, and then laughing a little, asked him a question.

"Where do you suppose I went first—when I grew up and could use the money my father and mother left? You have one guess."

He was impolite enough not to answer.

"To Calcutta! For no sane reason on earth,—only because I had seen that ship unload, years before, and the name got into my blood, and it was a long way off. Other girls I knew went to London and Paris—I went to Calcutta! That was the first real blow for Hannah. She had to go, too!"

Another pause happened, and again Lieutenant Hawthorne neglected to break it. He had been staring over the row of flower-pots with a queer look, but he smiled quickly at Hannah's

martyrdom in India. With that the girl had appeared to have finished her confidence. But when at last he turned to her with a curious combination of distant courtesy and eagerness, she answered exactly as if he had spoken, seeming not to be able to help it.

“These are the things—nobody understood. . . . That was only the beginning. I really think Hannah would have gone on any voyage after that. But I didn’t try her again, that way. It was something quite different. I began to want—oh, terribly—to *do* things; the pull of effort. You see? . . . So—so I found another kind of adventure, a kind that counted—with greater—stakes—” She broke off, and the intensity all fell away as quickly as it had gathered itself. She ended lightly.

“So I shocked Hannah again, and when I came down here—to raise geraniums, if you please—it nearly finished her.”

Miles Hawthorne felt rather dazed himself. He took a long breath. Then he dared to go and stand rather near this girl—who had read a telegram, and gone to Calcutta. He under-

stood now the catch in her voice when she read out where Halleck was going on the *Alaska*. He stood looking down at her, and it rapidly became necessary to say something. He again returned to poor Hannah.

"You rather put her through her paces, didn't you? What a trump she was to follow you, blindly! . . . Your—your other adventure?"

It was then that the Geranium Lady leaned back into the sun again. She looked up at him, and spoke quietly.

"It was too scientific for my heart, you see." The reserved finality of her tone closed the incident. "Suddenly I couldn't bear it! . . ."

After that all at once she was telling him the promised story about old Betty Latch, whose lover was a sailor and had lifted anchor for New South Wales and never come back. And so Betty's wits went wandering, in search of him. She had loved her little hens and erected tombstones over their graves!

"My heart is consumed within me."

June read him the inscription on the poor

foolish stone without a suggestion of a laugh in her voice.

“BEAUTY LINNA
DIED AT 7 O’CLOCK IN THE EVE.
I am left to the evil to come.”

Indeed she would talk no more about herself. In the bright garden where long shadows had begun to stray she gave him Hannah’s own root beer and molasses cookies. They laughed together over small things. And too soon he had to leave because of the four-mile walk yet before him. Though she seemed to have been careful not to invite him in the first place, now she asked him to come again. . . .

On the way to Long Point Farm, through the lanes where twilight came prematurely, he smiled over what she had said about the pull of effort, adventure that counted, heavy stakes. It made him walk fast, cramming his hands into his pockets, and lift up his head. And yet she had given up the “adventure”! Perhaps it was different with a woman, he thought; he supposed it must be. . . .

In the almost dark woods of Deep Bottom he met William Blake coming to seek him. The secretary said nothing; but Hawthorne wanted to knock him down. Instead, he slipped a hand through his arm, and said quietly: "I'll raise your salary tomorrow, boy. You've got a stupid job! . . ."

That night, with the mournful sound of surf surging in from the sea, Miles Hawthorne, finally sleeping, dreamed strangely—of acres of scarlet velvet that smelled like geraniums! Then as this gorgeous mantle shimmered, more precious than cloth of gold, the sweetness changed all at once into the smothering scent of ether, which was—a remarkable thing—quite welcome!

CHAPTER IV

A GREAT-GRANDSON OF SHAMAWNA

THE South Beach stretched east and west, a ribbon of sand in hot loneliness, edging a green sea. Lieutenant Hawthorne apparently had the coast to himself, except for a cloud of gulls and an old wreck. He walked close to the small waves—the tide was far ebbd—and smoked his pipe, and thought of about a thousand different things, but one in particular.

The brilliant June afternoon, with its wide still calm and its fragrance, lay warmly glowing about him. In its gentle influence it seemed to him like all the summer Sunday afternoons he had ever known. They had been spent in vastly varying places, but he had always recognized in each a constant quality. In the sleepy quiet of his mother's unforgotten garden when—a very little boy—he had swung on the front

gate while she napped sabbatically upstairs, in the suspended activity of a battleship's quarter-deck with the ocean a hot blue lake, even in the unchallenged gaiety of an Eastern seventh day, there had always been, for him, a faint flavor of something that was distinctively Sunday afternoon, at home, in June. This phenomenon was comparable, he often thought, to the constant factor in everything beautiful—the quality identical in such widely differing things as, for instance, deep green untroubled water, Diana in marble, Gothic spires washed with rain, an old tune sung under the night sky. And now the unnamable comfort of all summer Sundays enveloped him. Because of it he did not think to be lonely. By nature rarely unhappy, he avoided self-indulgence in the matter of comparisons, and yielded without quarter to the guidance of the day.

Strolling, he smoked and watched the gulls. He passed the old wreck and realized that it was not far from the place where the Beach had been opened on a certain memorable morning, a place he had not since visited. He walked

on to see how the work had withstood the constant washing in of sand on the shelving coast. In the vicinity of the cut in the Beach it was certainly not unnatural to remember a scarlet cloak that had lain on the sand there, and which had turned out to belong to a slim figure in white with a red bouquet; or to recall a wind-swept meeting. He felt that, under the circumstances, it was perfectly legitimate to think about June Carver a little. He deliberately allowed himself that privilege.

Why had she been startled into saying, there by the hammock, that she "must have forgotten"—forgotten, it was obvious, to tell him he could not come? Afterwards she had patched it up; but she said it. He had given thought to that before. . . . Why had it been ordained that he should blunder into her presence? He was not sorry that he had found her, that the whole afternoon had been possible, but he had as large a twinge as the calm day would allow, at the memory of the manner of it. Of course she knew that he had not seen she was there! It was odd that he minded that and not the

thought of the telegram! But he did. . . . Why had she told him about the ship from Calcutta? Over that he grinned and blew little rings at the waves. To think of her going there! . . . What adventure was it she had given up for so remarkable a reason?

He reached the place on the shore where the Bijah's Cove and Bridgewater men had made the channel, and the myriad herring had flopped through to the sea. Only a shallow groove was left. It had not taken long for the sea to undo the work of the wooden shovels. As he stood looking at the demolished channel and thinking about the girl who, one found, owned not only a scarlet cloak but also a scarlet garden, somebody on the other side of the vanishing cut rose from the sand where he had been lying,—a large dark man who touched his hat to Lieutenant Hawthorne.

It was Jim Brant, dusky, uncouth, towering. And oddly enough he stood in the very spot where he had looked across at the same man once before as he asked: "Did he do that?" and added profanely, "God!"

"Good afternoon." Hawthorne spoke first, instantly sure that this was the half-breed whose history had interested him. He was always drawn to the unusual. He had many strange acquaintances in stranger parts of the earth, to the alarm of his friends; and this man's fantastic mixture of bloods was arresting. Impulsively he had asked him to Long Point Farm with the freedom of a simplicity that the Islanders did not know was cosmopolitan. Now he motioned a greeting with the hand holding his pipe, and smiled with sincere cordiality.

"Good afternoon, Brant," he repeated, not having received an answer. "I thought it was you. I'm glad to see you again."

He stepped across the groove in the sand, and stood beside Jim Brant. He would have been more than interested if he had known how what Brant had heard of him had laid hold of the Indian's intense imagination, since the day they had worked side by side in the ditch.

"I think perhaps you were coming to see me, weren't you?"

The dark man had not yet spoken, merely pulling at the brim of his hat several times. Now his voice was hesitant and deep, making all his words sound jagged.

"I—I—thought you'd—forgot."

"Of course not. Will you go back with me now?"

"I cal'late," was the brief answer.

They walked down the Beach in the direction from which Hawthorne had come, and he was conscious that his singular companion, who lurched beside him in the sand, was in the clutch of awkwardness that was making him suffer, a very agony of self-consciousness. He dragged off his hat, as if he somehow could not help it, and not knowing what to do with it hung his head. Hawthorne appeared not to notice.

"Our handiwork didn't last very long, did it?" he remarked, as they turned their backs on the channel.

"No,—sir."

"How often do they do all that work?" Hawthorne tried to put the man at his ease,

"Three or four times a year."

"They never make a wider cut, I suppose."

"It 'u'd be a sight o' work,—sir. We cal'late to—some day."

"And there are all the herring. We spoke about that the day of the opening, do you remember? Isn't that a lost opportunity? If old Mr. Baxter doesn't care to take it I should think some ambitious man would buy the right of him."

Jim Brant hesitated; then in his stumbling voice burst out, "I—hev thought on't!" and looked down at the hat he clutched.

Hawthorne smoked silently. And presently the man added:

"I'm savin'."

"Are you the only one?"

"I cal'late."

Hawthorne looked thoughtfully at the hewn profile projected dark against the green sea. It was equally strong and inscrutable.

"Then you would prefer that I shouldn't mention it. I won't. But would Mr. Baxter sell the right, do you think?"

"He's one o' the kind,"—the half-breed looked around suddenly at the off-islander—"as don't want a thing hisself, and don't want—nobody else—ter hev it!"

"I see."

"I keep still,—an' save."

"I suppose it will take some time?"

"Things has ter go as I want 'em," said the Indian savagely, "er—somebody pays!"

The half-breed's embarrassment had begun to slip from him. He sent Miles Hawthorne a grateful glance or two, and so far forgot his hat as to swing it easily by his side. As they walked Hawthorne was wondering how it would feel to be all that Brant was, and yet nothing!

When they reached the old wreck the white man sat down and motioned the Indian to do so too. It seemed to him that this queer violent half-breed, hoarding his hireling's wages for a chance at the only independent enterprise opportunity offered, one scorned by the native owners of the place, was a dramatic figure. He was glad to have encountered him today.

"Let us wait here," he said, "and watch the sun go down."

The alien sat with his chin cupped in his large palms. Into his swarthy face, by turns brooding and eager, a pleasant content had begun to creep, softening the crag-like features. It was as if the beneficent afternoon glow had touched his soul, too. After a silence he volunteered timidly.

"It 'll be a—red—sunset."

Hawthorne glanced at him in surprise.

"Yes," he replied.

There was another pause. The half-breed in his turn looked hard at the man beside him on the beam of the wrecked ship, who was himself staring at the flaming west.

"I like 'em red," he muttered.

"What? Oh—sunsets. So do I."

Then the naval officer added practically:

"But too bright a red at night means wind, you know."

As he spoke he pointed to the scarlet heart of the clouds burning above the tinted sea and the coppery Great Pond, whose farther shore

was black, the Beach tawny between; but the Indian looked at the uplifted hand instead. His eyes dropped with it to the beam again. And he sat up quiveringly straight. What he had seen added a vivid detail to the picture piecing itself together in his fervid mind, of the swift brave thing this man had done. For there was a scar there, too, inside! . . .

After its climax the gorgeous west would soon fade. Hawthorne rose quickly.

"It's almost over," he said. "Come home with me now, and we'll make a light."

The walk back to the farm through the all too quickly vanishing beauty, was covered in silence. The singular companions could be equally quiet and swift. And at the doorway of the old house Hawthorne paused, looking back, with a smile that surprised the half-breed. The afterglow on the grass looked, dimly, like a velvet mantle, dull red. . . .

They went into the parlor of Long Point Farm house, a large square room, with many-paned windows now turning dusky. It was furnished with sturdy old tables and chairs that had

been left there for years without becoming weak jointed, and with a few things the present tenant had brought down. Before the stone fireplace of enormous size lay a leopard's skin, sleek and spotted. There were two javelins above the mantle with their points crossed. A shepherd's crook stood in the chimney-corner. In the center of the room was a table to make a collector's heart leap, disordered with books and a large map. More books crammed shelves that looked recently built in. But the walls had no pictures. On a small table by itself stood a bowl full of the blossoms of the spice bushes that grew on Bijah's Cove.

As the towering half-breed followed Hawthorne, almost as tall and much straighter, into this room, the bent figure of Bone shuffled in from an opposite door with a lamp, the light from which flared on his withered black face and on the whites of the eyes that he rolled disdainfully at Jim Brant. He set the lamp in the midst of the littered table, where it revealed Hawthorne's unusual guest, comparatively at ease now, in spite of the negro's disapproval.

Bone's departure came very near being an audible sniff.

The Indian looked about him respectfully at the room which was so different from Bijah Baxter's kitchen, or parlor, for that matter; he had never seen so many books together before. Hawthorne sat down by the table and relighted his pipe, but Jim Brant refused to smoke. With the divination that had aided him with his other queer friends he knew that this was because the half-breed deemed the act too familiar. So he did not urge. They sat across from each other before the leopard's skin and the empty grate.

"I wish I had more of my traps down here to show you," Lieutenant Hawthorne began, between puffs, "because you would like them. Those spears up there belonged to a Filipino I had the pleasure of meeting once. Then there's this old boy"; he pointed to the skin of the leopard. "A great friend of mine, Halleck, shot him in India. That crook over there came from Greece. I persuaded a shepherd to sell it to me, near Marathon."

Brant listened eagerly, looking hard at the "traps." Then he rose and took the tall staff into his hand. He knew something about shepherding, himself.

"It's like them pictures in the Baxters' Bible," he observed critically.

"Yes. They're using them over there yet. And they make pipes to play on—there's one on the mantel, isn't there?—just as they did back four thousand years, you know."

"I *don't* know!" burst out the half-breed. "I don't know—nothin'!"

"I'm not sure about that," ventured Hawthorne slowly, looking up with speculation at the Indian who liked sunsets—red. He had begun to enjoy watching this personality unfold, and helping it to do so. "I have an idea, now, that you quite understand a man's making a pipe, while he watched his sheep, and what he would play on it!"

Brant stood on the spotted rug, holding the delicate pipe of reeds in his large hands. He gazed at his host wonderingly, a slow smile just showing in the lamplight.

"Yes—I know—that!"

"Well, few people do. So, you see, you are very wise!"

The strange man put the pipe on the shelf again, and coming back sat down on the edge of the chair facing Hawthorne, with his elbows on his knees and his hands folded.

"Tell me some more!" he said.

The windows had darkened almost completely with the coming of the lamp. The large room was shadowy. The two by the table made an odd pair. In the huge swarthy man there was a combination of Indian stoniness—which, one fleetingly guessed, could change to something molten,—of the easily swayed emotion of the southern European, and of the shame-faced aspiration, even gentleness, of the Anglo-Saxon. Moreover there was the humbled air of the out-cast who belonged to no race. But that they were together tonight in the old house on the lonely shore did not seem strange to either of them. As Hawthorne, willing to please his guest if possible, and casting about in his memory for something more to tell, resumed his

talk, the murmur of the surf, almost extinguished in the dead calm of the day, gathered itself, and unexpectedly floated through the open window in a low surge. Each man looked over his shoulder for a moment, as if at the entrance of a third person, but there was only a blown curtain and a breath of cool air.

"The tide has turned," remarked Hawthorne. "We shall have a change, now."

He had caught a hint of the inner life of Jim Brant, which might, by sympathy, be turned into channels of legitimate accomplishment; which could, he imagined, by some sudden twist, be hurled into an unguessed way. But he spoke now with no complex motive, only a simple desire to please someone whom nobody cared to please. And as he gave unstinting entertainment to his humble guest there gathered in the Indian's eyes a concentration of devotion, of which both were equally unaware. . . .

The breath at the window turned into a cold breeze. Hawthorne rose to close the sash.

"That sound," he said, jerking his head in

the direction of the sea and laughing a little, "is like a human companion down here; but a strange one! Once or twice, at night, I've imagined it's — menacing. I ought to be ashamed of the fancy. . . . It's grown cold. . . . Shall we have a fire?"

Brant had gone to the window, too, and was looking out.

"Will you light a fire?" Hawthorne repeated. And the Indian returned, hurriedly, to the leopard's skin, to obey.

And as he knelt there, lifting the logs with his great hands, it seemed to Miles Hawthorne that his request had held a peremptory ring. Unintentionally he had shifted the half-breed to the position of his servant. He had not meant to do so. He stood by the table, hesitating, and frowning down upon the bent figure at the shadowy hearth, in a singular way. It would have been better to call Bone. When, with a miniature roar, the kindling burst into flame, he closed his eyes for a moment.

Opening them, he found the half-breed staring at him, all his embarrassment returned.

And it suddenly seemed necessary to banish his discomfort, to leave an unspoiled evening for Jim Brant! Therefore, for his guest's sake the officer of the *Alaska* made a confession.

"I should not have asked you,"—he spoke with some effort, though he smiled quite as if it had been Halleck or some other such man—"but I rather hate to light it—now."

At that Brant stood motionless, though his eyes burned. Then all at once with a swift movement he stepped forward and with the ends of his fingers touched Hawthorne's arm. In hurried hesitant gutturals he spoke, freely for the first time.

"I—know why you told me—that!"

The fire crackled up. With it something burst into freedom out of the dark man's spirit.

"You—want ter make me—forget—who I am! I didn't suppose there *were*—anybody—like that. . . ."

He drew back with another lithe motion, and stood aloof on the spotted rug.

"I'm sort of a bad lot—maybe you didn't know."

Hawthorne's gesture protested.

"But good God, sir,—I've got the blood of one—gentleman! That's why I c'u'd set in this room. And it's why you—you talked to me, like you did. It's—why!"

The fire mounted behind the towering figure, leaping fiercely like the flame of his own excitement. But Hawthorne came swiftly into the circle of its abhorred hot brilliance and grasped Jim Brant's right hand.

"I should have known it was so," he said.

The Indian wrung the hand offered, and then with one quick glance let it fall, almost gently.

"Thanks," he muttered.

He continued to stand on the hearth rug with his back to the blaze and staring over the lamp. He made an odd ungraceful gesture, like the inarticulate speech of a man once dumb.

"Sometimes I'm all Indian!" he burst out—barriers burned down. "No white man knows! There's heaven in it. An' hell!—Once er twice I've felt all white man—but it ain't Portugee I mean. . . ."

"What do you mean, Brant?" asked Hawthorne quietly. He had sat down again at the table.

"Why—this. My great-granfer were an Englishman, an' a gentleman in that country. You made me feel like him tonight. You—treated me like—him!"

"I've done very little, surely. Others must have done as much."

"Yes—I'll tell you who. That girl up at the Betty Latch house—she treated me white. You know her. I caught her hat on the Beach. Well—she's the other one."

"Tell me about your great-grandfather," said Miles Hawthorne suddenly.

The half-breed folded his arms on his great chest. He still stared off across the room with turbulent eyes, in which smouldered the complex history of all the souls that had gone to make up his.

"It ain't a—pretty—story," he muttered.

"Many true ones aren't."

"My father told me afore he died. He were an ole man. I'm his last son. It were his

granfer. . . . That makes it mighty near, don't it?"

"Very near indeed."

"The man were travelin' fer pleasure; wanted ter see the world. An' in course o' time he come ter this here Island. It's all wrote down in a book the school-teacher showed me. He were called a very fine man, the book says. There was Indians on the Island, livin' pretty wild, like they did then. An' my great-granfer got friends with 'em. An' he come ter love one o' the young squaws. Her name were kinder pretty like — Shamawna. She were beautiful. . . . Do you know what I think? I think he really loved her." A dark hand was flung out unconsciously in the firelight.

"Why not?" said Hawthorne.

"I think that because he married her, Indian style. The book tells about the big feast. An' I think it because she were beautiful. Besides, he stayed here a long time. All one summer."

"Do you know where?"

"Over in Deep Bottom."

From the first the name had seemed to Miles

Hawthorne suggestive of still mystery and "flying sweetness."

The somber eyes brooded.

"But summat come happen—in the ole country. He had ter go back. . . . She took it hard. An' she said he'd never go."

"But of course he did go. That's the old story."

"No. . . . She took it awful hard—his last night in the wigwam. An' toward mornin'—when he were asleep—she killed him. . . . You see, she'd said he'd never go!"

"Good Lord!"

Hawthorne leaned toward the tall figure behind which the fire was sinking down.

"What happened then?"

"Some Englishmen come a long time arter, an' made a stir, an' took his body away with them. They wanted to hang the girl. But she were dead a'ready. She had a son, an' that killed her, they said. Wal'—Shamawna's son were my granfer. That's the story."

For a moment the room was as still as Shamawna's wigwam must have been, over

in Deep Bottom, after she had taken it hard. At the end of the brief recital the Indian closed his lips, after the manner of his race, and retired into stoniness. Then Hawthorne came again to the man on the leopard rug and put his hands on his shoulders.

"I don't envy you your heritage, Jim Brant," he said.

"Aw—well. . . ." The half-breed looked down awkwardly.

Then he lifted his eyes to the off-islander for an instant, and dropped them again.

"But there's all that was back of the Englishman! With that blood in your body you should *do* something. Then I believe you'd—you'd feel white all the time! . . . I've got a scheme. Those—those herring are—on my mind. They worry me! I'd like to go in with you on that deal. I'll advance the money, and then you wouldn't have to wait."

"You—mean—"

"We should be partners in the business. I'll go and see Mr. Baxter tomorrow, if you agree. What do you say? Is it yes?"

The half-breed drew in his breath.

"Yes—sir," he gasped. "Yes. . . ."

His lips worked as if he would say more; and again he threw out both hands in his graceless eloquent way.

"I—I—I will *do* something fer you!" he faltered at last. "I will do anything—anything!"

CHAPTER V

WEATHER SIGNS

“‘‘Sheep’s fleece and mares’ tails
Make lofty ships carry low sails,’’

remarked Captain Madison. He stood in June Carver’s oak grove, his hands as usual fumbling in his enormous pockets, and gazed critically at the arching sky where the clouds were mottled, soft, and woolly, with one long white wisp trailing across the zenith.

“It really is just like sheep’s fleece, isn’t it, Captain?” exclaimed June, standing beside the skipper, also gazing upward. “And that beautiful frisky tail up there might belong to the Great White Horse of the Saxons. To think it all means something! Oh, I shall soon be very weather-wise!”

“It’s summat easier to remember when ye rhyme it,” went on the old man. “I l’arned

a sight o' verses from my father when I first went to sea. They be handy fer a beginner; but when ye're well salted, as ye may say, ye don't stop to fit poetry to a sky like that. Ye reef the sails."

"You think I'd better learn the poetry, don't you?" asked the girl, with a twinkle.

"It's no harm to hev it by ye. If a party is real sensible about the weather I cal'late they'll be sensible about other things too. I never yet see a man who'd put out when the birds was comin' in but he was flighty in his head altogether. That's good logick. There's weather signs *an'* weather signs! An' if ye can't read 'em in folks's talk an' faces any more than some pussons kin in the sky, then ye git yer comeuppence, that's all. I've perceived it. . . . 'When the wind backs up against the sun, trust it not, fer back it will come.' That's another good un."

Captain Madison dropped, creaking, into the Geranium Lady's willow garden chair, where she had been sewing before he drove down the road and thumped Sally's iron weight before

Ocean. But I allays say there's adventures enough happen right on this here Island to make a story book. A man don't need to go to foreign parts. But here's Cap'n Henderson. Ye've seen his house in the village, shut up tight now, 'tis. He went round the world, alone, in a bo't he built himself; called her the *Spray*. He come back an' wrote a book about it. They hev it in the stores in Boston. See it there myself. Now he's off again, to South America this time. He'll lay his bones in the old *Spray* yet! If he wanted to write a book he could hev written about this Island. Did ye ever hear the story o' the South Beach?"

June Carver shook her head. She was leaning back in the willow chair, her sewing in her lap, smiling a little as she looked off across the hollow.

"'A Portuguese man-of-war in the water,
With sail in the air—'

That's pretty, Captain Madison."

"Wal', I dun'no' about the rhyme; it's a purty sight enough. . . . But it do beat all. When I

repeated that verse to ye jest now it reminded me o' summat I had to tell ye. I declare it's clean gone from me."

The Captain cast his eye up at the sheep's fleece and mares' tails for inspiration, and scratched his head. The smile in the Geranium Lady's dark eyes deepened.

"Was it about a Portuguese," she asked, "or a man-of-war?"

"Wal' now ye are a smart un!" exclaimed the skipper with admiration. "It were in a manner o' speakin' about both! It were about Cap'n Hawthorne an' Jim Brant I meant to tell ye summat. But perhaps he's told ye himself."

Again June shook her head.

"No," mused Captain Madison. "O' course he wouldn't tell it—not if he were the man to do it."

"What is it—about Mr. Hawthorne?"

"Why it's all over the village that he's startin' Jim Brant in the herrin' business, and calls himself a partner in it!"

"Herring business!"

"Jest so. He went to see Bijah Baxter him-

self, and talked the old man into sellin' the right to net the herrin' when the Pawnd is opened! I cal'late ye've heard about Bijah. He were born with a chip on his shoulder an' a gold spoon in his mouth. He'd quarrel with the Apostle Paul, an' he's so close fisted he can't open up his fingers to shake hands. But they say that young man made him laugh! An' they set on the veranda an' smoked together like pals, with the family peekin' by turns round the corner o' the house. An' then Bijah he got out an old map of the Pawnd and the South Beach to figure out jest where the cut should be. And first thing anybody knew he come stompin' into the house blowin' his nose hard! I cal'late ye know why. Then he sent for Jim Brant, and drew up a sort o' a contrack, an' they all signed it. So that's how the new company were formed."

"It is good of Mr. Hawthorne, isn't it?" said June Carver quietly. She had dropped her work into her lap during the old man's account and again her dark eyes rested unseeing on the gentle hollow.

"Yes, it's good of him," said the Captain. "But it don't exactly surprise me. I want to tell you, my dear,"—the old sailor's voice made June turn to him quickly,—"I love that young man!"

"Do you?"

"I were the first friend he had on this Island."

"You were mine, too, not counting the people in the old days. They've all forgotten me."

"Yes, I were his first friend here. It came to me," went on Captain Madison, "that he were goin' to be purty lonesome, considerin' all that had happened. An' I set to work to cal'late what would make him [happy. Now he's strikin' out fer himself." The old man chuckled. "I didn't think to suggest the herrin' industry."

"What did you do to make him happy?"

"Wal'," the Captain grinned. "I sorter introduced him round to the folks I thought he orter meet."

"Oh," smiled the Geranium Lady, "then you didn't think it essential for him to know me! You remember we met quite by chance."

"Accidents will happen," replied Captain Madison sagely.

"Speakin' o' that very thing," continued the old man, after a pause, "there's summat I've never be'n able to figure out, and that is what he meant by makin' such a remark to ye that mornin'."

The girl looked up suddenly.

"You noticed it then?" she said.

"Noticed it! Ye couldn't very well help noticin' the look on his face an' them words, both together. 'But I've never seen ye before'! That were it. Mind ye, not '*Hev* I ever seen ye before?' There's a big difference."

"Captain Madison," June Carver leaned forward earnestly. "I want you to do something for me, will you?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if I did. What'll ye hev, my dear?"

"I want you to forget that you heard him say that. Can you?"

The skipper gave the Geranium Lady, rather pale now, a long keen look, thoughtfully rubbing his chin.

"Wal'," he finally drawled, "I can't fergit it, but by Gosh, I will!"

She smiled a little.

"And promise me something else, too. . . . I want you to—that is—please keep right on—making him happy. . . ."

The grove became very quiet, while the girl sewed down a long seam without looking up, and Captain Madison watched the sun gradually buried in the sheep's fleece. He was a wise man in weather signs. Nothing was ever lost upon him. He knew, now, for instance, that the clouding sky meant a long steady wind, wholesome and sweet as it would be strong, swift to carry tall ships to harbor. He knew many other signs, too.

As they sat thus in silence, in the distance at the top of the gentle rise that made the brim of the hollow of Bijah's Cove a man on a horse appeared. The old sailor scratched his head. He had not yet answered the girl's request.

"I promise ye," he said slowly. "But I

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back and the Captain twinkled again benevolently.

“But bear in mind,” he called out to Hawthorne as the buggy got under way, “that all weather signs may fail!”

CHAPTER VI

RAIN ON THE ROOF

As the days swiftly and wonderfully passed his memory of what had accompanied their first meeting had faded into an unreality. He doubted if it had ever happened at all in his certainty that her beauty was a wholly new experience. And at every meeting it seemed to have increased, this beauty of hers which was not the first thing he had noticed about her. Her dusky hair, her dark eyes that had a way of softly shining, one never tired of seeing them anew! Her face was a healthy white—she freckled slightly instead of tanning—until, rarely, two deep rose spots dyed her cheeks. But it was not all this that made her beautiful. There hung about her, in her glance, her smile, her very gesture, something ineffably tender, like a rich overtone. Varied as he found her

moods, it entered them all, sometimes—he enjoyed multiplying metaphors—a deep chime heard very near, or again when she was gay the echo of a sweet tune, rare, thin, vanishing, but never gone. He could not believe that this was for him, for he heard it also when she talked with Hannah, or Captain Madison, or even Jim Brant. Once when he saw her speak with a Portuguese child it had come swiftly, like a rush of symphonic music. It was a calm song when she was gardening. This June, it seemed, would care for the whole world.

“Come in,” she smiled now as he tied his horse. And that tone in her voice was ringing a little chime. “I’ve been making doughnuts, and I’m going to give you one!”

He came into the shady dining-room, with the comfortable rocking-chair by the window on the meadow side. Every dining-room should have a rocking-chair, he thought, and if possible somebody’s old desk.

“Don’t they smell good?” she asked him, and brought out a plateful of her golden-brown doughnuts.

He greedily chose the largest.

"I warn you I'm going to eat four!"

They sat by the window and Hawthorne made good his threat, while the new horse came in for his share of the treat, receiving a red apple.

"Where's Hannah?" he inquired after the third doughnut. "I miss her masterly defence."

"She's gone for the milk," the girl replied, and it struck him, not for the first time, that she was relieved to have her henchwoman out of the way. They often joked over Hannah's making the cottage a fortress, and Hawthorne always laughed, but nevertheless he was puzzled over the woman's open disapproval of him. It was not dislike, he could not help knowing; instead it savored of indignation at his mere presence.

"Can't you persuade her," he continued, "that I'm not a dangerous character?"

"But what if it should turn out that you are?" said June.

It was simple and satisfying just to idle in

Betty Latch's dining-room, with its bowl of scarlet flowers on the table. Miles Hawthorne, after he had followed June into the pantry and back, leaned his elbows on the dining-room table and talked to the Geranium Lady across the flowers in a way that really caused her request of Captain Madison to seem superfluous. It evidently did not require the skipper's endeavors to make this man happy. Hannah, returned with the milk, and making an errand into the room with the obvious motive of a flounce of disapproval, received only a glance and a smile. Their talk appeared important, but perhaps neither Hawthorne nor June would have thought it worth recording.

All the afternoon slow clouds had been gathering over the Sound, to the north. Storms do not come suddenly on the Island; one has plenty of warning. But neither of them noticed the weather signs in spite of Captain Madison's tutelage, until big drops and a roll of thunder caused his horse, the Admiral, to stamp and whinny, and the shower broke over

the cottage. Hawthorne went out into it to quiet the frightened animal.

Presently he appeared in the doorway, leading the horse, who trembled at every lightning flash.

"I'll have to beg shelter for him in a barn up the road," he told her; and mounting rode off through the rain.

It was twenty minutes before he returned in a borrowed oilskin, for it had set in for a drenching downpour. And he found June Carver setting the table. . . . So that is how it happened that Lieutenant Hawthorne was invited to supper at the Betty Latch Cottage.

It had grown nearly dark with the storm, so she put candles on the table. And they sat down opposite each other, while the rain made a steady patter on the grass and a dripping off the eaves; and the thunder rolled now farther off. It was a long time since Miles Hawthorne had eaten with a woman. He could not remember that he had sat at a meal in just this way since he had a mother, whose pretty house in a small town was his memory

well. But when it's sunny I'm quite matter-of-fact. And when it rains, down into slippery streets, or dank gardens, it seems to me—comfortable, to look about in your mind and heart and have an awareness of your individual existence. Do you know what I mean?"

"Very well."

"And if you have anything to think over—any problem, it helps a lot to have it rain! It seems as if there were more space, and more time. Everything just stops and waits—while it goes on raining, and you decide."

"Problems are sometimes hard," said Hawthorne gravely. "I hope you haven't any to solve."

"Oh—one or two. . . . You see rain on the roof makes it—them—easier and at the same time more difficult. Because you have the past and the future with you almost equally real. And some of the things that you didn't know were important stand right up and demand to be thought about. Why, when it drips off the eaves like that I could perfectly easily believe—that my old doll Araminta had

the small-pox! Or I can see for the first time just what was behind some action of five years ago. Or I know, perhaps, how I'll feel about something in ten or twenty or fifty years."

"I shall have to call you the Wise Woman of Tarley," he smiled. "And I shall bring my difficulties to you every time we have a shower."

"Oh, I'll let you bring them when the sun shines, too."

"Thanks. I believe it's coming down harder than ever. . . . Did it ever occur to you that rain, and wind, are the only audible forms of the weather? The sun can blaze on you, or the cold freeze you, or the snow fall a foot deep, in dead silence. But rain and wind are companionable. I found that out when—I was once in a hospital, with the top of my head tied up."

"Yes," said June, "I have thought of it."

"You have? That's rather odd. . . ."

He pulled the bowl of geraniums toward him, and slowly selecting the largest blossom handed it across the table.

"Why not wear it?" he suggested.

"Was—that—very long ago?" she asked, putting the flower into the front of her gown.

"You mean my weather observations? Not quite a year. It took about five months before they turned me out, pretty well patched up, considering. . . . Do you know, I think if I wanted an idol I should worship Skill?"

The girl laced her fingers on the tablecloth.

"But after all," she slowly remarked, "it's not everything."

He leaned forward and looked at her eagerly.

"You are always right. You always—know. There *are* a few other things a man—craves. Perhaps you will think it impossible, but with all the skill that surrounded me, then, there was only one little act—of the other sort."

"I—I wish that I could have been there." Her voice was hesitant. "Perhaps I should have known the other things to do!"

"How is it," he asked her slowly, "that you do know?"

"It's not because I'm—I," she answered, turning it off. "It's just because I'm a woman!

Didn't you know there are certain exquisite things a woman is born wanting to do?"

"I haven't known many," said Lieutenant Hawthorne. "But the ones I have aren't exactly—like that."

"Then you didn't really know them. They're all that way, 'under the skin,' only perhaps they don't even know it themselves."

In their pause it became evident that the rain had stopped as suddenly as it had begun. The Geranium Lady looked down at her locked fingers. She seemed to be thinking very hard about something.

"The rain is over," said Hawthorne, changing the subject. "Did you get your question settled or must it wait for the next storm?"

"The trouble is," she raised her eyes, "Captain Madison says after this we shall have a spell of clear weather!"

There was a heavy knock on the dining-room door.

"Oh," whispered the Geranium Lady and paused, "it's—the mail!"

Miles Hawthorne went to the door, as Hannah put her head in from the kitchen.

"Hello, Jim!" he said. "Come in; you must be wet."

Jim Brant stepped into the dining-room, looking from June to the tall man. The girl smiled at him faintly, but she did not speak or hold out her hand for the mail. Hawthorne took it and gave it to Hannah, who had stridden in.

"I ain't very wet," replied the half-breed. "It's clearin'."

Hannah ran through the mail.

"Two bills and my paper," she muttered, "and your letter."

She put a square thick envelope beside June Carver's plate with a severe gesture, and strode out of the room again.

"Thank you, Jim. You never forget us," the Geranium Lady finally spoke. "I hope you weren't out in all the storm."

"I like to be," said the Indian to her, but he was watching Hawthorne, who was looking happily at the girl still at her place by the table.

"I'll go along now," he added. "I've got the Martins' mail." And he disappeared into the darkness.

June Carver left the fat envelope lying by her plate and rose, pushing back her chair. Hawthorne wondered if it were for that letter she was to remember Tuesday.

She went to the door and looked into the cool night, while the candles on the table flickered until one blew out. He stood beside her. The storm had completely passed and the sky cleared.

"The stars are coming out!" she exclaimed.

He looked down at her shoulder.

"You see, for me," he said in a matter-of-fact way, "there's no sky any more at night."

There was a quick catch in her breath as her hand went to her throat. She said something so low that he bent down to get it.

"Why that's nothing," he told her quietly. "You mustn't do that. . . . Really you mustn't!—"

"I won't," she said after a moment. "I'm not!"—

By and by she asked him:

"Didn't you say, back there, that you thought skill should be worshiped?"

"I said I could worship it."

"What a wonderful man the surgeon must be, who—who did so much."

"Yes,—Dr. Kimball. But then, as you said, after all it's not everything."

"No," she repeated slowly, "it's not everything. . . ."

When Lieutenant Hawthorne started on his dark ride back to Long Point Farm June Carver, being a man's woman, bit her lips but said nothing. She need not have feared, however, for the high-strung Admiral was friendly and wise. He already knew the road through Deep Bottom, though like his master he also was an off-islander. He gave no trouble at all, shying only once, at what Hawthorne could not tell.

Jim Brant stepped back into the road again after allowing the Admiral to pass, and continued walking in the direction of Long Point.

He was wise enough not to let the man from the *Alaska* know that he was safeguarded; and as he plunged along through the mud he laboriously invented an excuse, in case he should be obliged to account for his presence.

Half an hour later he reached the farm. Not liking to go in, he looked through the low windows of the room he knew, to make sure that Hawthorne had arrived safely. They were wide open, and staring in, he paused and listened.

Miles Hawthorne and the Admiral had needed no safeguarding. The off-islander was kneeling by his bookcases, pulling out volume after volume, consulting Blake, and throwing them on the floor. The secretary, with much-rumpled hair, was yawning as if he had been tumbled off a couch in the corner. Hawthorne was laughing at him, though he was rather impatient, too, at not being able to find what he wanted.

"I want to hear it, Blake, and I want to hear it tonight! It's stupid of me not to remember. Oh, damn!"

"There's nothing like what you said in here," said William Blake. "Honestly."

"I suppose you're right. Try this. Ah! I think that's my Ben Jonson."

Jim Brant was puzzled. And he was dimly aware that a gentleman would go away. But he did not go. He stayed on, and watched the man he had followed home walk up and down the long room with his head held rather high, while the secretary continued the search he had given up.

"I've got it!" said William Blake at last, holding up still another volume and giving the master of Long Point a look of amazement.

"Is that the way it begins?" asked the tall man eagerly from the hearth rug. "'She walks in beauty like the night'—is that it?"

Blake nodded.

"That's right." And he read the brief stanzas in astonishment, though they were really very good poetry.

"Yes." . . . Miles Hawthorne said slowly.
"Yes. . . ."

He laughed.

"And now you may go to bed, Blake. Good night."

When Jim Brant turned away from the window, ignorant as he was, he was puzzled no longer.

CHAPTER VII

A STRANGE MEETING

THE third week in the month—it was June—the moon was full. From the South Beach one could see it night after night rise out of the water. Just before its wane Jim Brant paid his tribute to it and to the Indian blood in his veins.

The night was dark blue. The ocean, in measureless silver grandeur, rolled in at the feet of the huge swarthy man who stood alone on the deserted beach. The moon rode high down her pale track. Gulls slept, rocking on the water.

The Indian's form was rigid, as were the features on his raised face. Only the hands were turned palms up in a slight strange gesture, the old, half-inarticulate, half-eloquent motion of a spirit stunned by its own com-

plexity. For Jim Brant was "all Indian" tonight.

Perhaps he did not know why he went to the Beach at the full of the moon. At these times something took him into the open, that was all, either to Deep Bottom, where Shamawna's wigwam had stood on the shore of the Cove, or to the sea. There was hardly a person on the Island who had not heard of the strange act, almost a rite, of which he was ashamed and that he tried to keep secret. He did not often do more than stand motionless and silent until the moon set. But if there were some excitement working, perhaps a farmer late at his chores or a fisherman coming in with a night tide might nod his head sleepily and say: "Hark! That's Jim Brant."

And tonight something besides the blood of Shamawna's race had produced the state when the civilization and prose of Bijah Baxter's Farm went for nothing. The devotion that had been born of Miles Hawthorne's kindness and the half-breed's passionate loneliness had

thriven. Dumb worship, such as only animals and Shamawna's people know, it had had its counterpart in love of a different sort over a century before, when another off-islander had been kind. Tonight it was heightened by what Jim Brant had learned about the man himself, and about the Geranium Lady, who, wonderfully enough, was kind too! .

The dark man's shadow lay quiet and short on the sand behind him. His position did not change. He might have been a primitive man calling upon the Great Spirit, but he was unconscious of any such comparison or emotion. He knew that people prayed to God in a white-washed church. The moon went up the heavens without in the least tempting him to nature worship. . . .

When he had found Lieutenant Hawthorne and June Carver at supper together, and later had looked through the windows of Long Point Farm, the Portuguese half-breed had seen something of which Hawthorne himself was scarcely yet aware. Of course he had heard long ago at Bijah's and in the village that

the naval officer was a frequent visitor at the Betty Latch Cottage. But since his first evening at Long Point and the remarkable partnership resulting from it everything that concerned the off-islander was intensely personal to Brant. Crude as he was, it thrilled him, now, to have seen what he did see in Hawthorne. But he had lately discovered something quite different, something about her they called the Geranium Lady, which he was sure was known to nobody else on the island. He did not count Hannah.

He had offered to bring June Carver's mail when he brought the Baxters' and the Martins'. She received a great deal. Lida Baxter did not get so much in a month as the Geranium Lady did in a week. And the most of it came Tuesdays and Fridays. On those days there was always a square fat envelope, which was often accompanied by a magazine or a package. The fat envelopes and the packages came from New York, and were all addressed in the same handwriting. It had been one of these letters that Lieutenant Hawthorne had given

to Hannah the evening he stayed for supper at the Betty Latch Cottage.

The next day a telegram had come for June Carver and Jim Brant had delivered that too. It had been telephoned over from the Port to Bridgewater according to custom. He had been present when it was audibly copied by the postmistress. It said: "Hasty trip to Atherton Wednesday. Meet me for lunch at Bayview Inn." It was signed "Warrington."

Now on Wednesday it oddly enough happened that Jim Brant had business in Atherton. He had to see a man for Hawthorne in regard to the herring enterprise. As senior partner in the "firm" Hawthorne had at first planned to go himself, but sent Brant to give him the experience. The half-breed was proud of his errand, for he knew that he was being tested. This made him glad to go. But after the telegram came he was glad for another reason.

"Meet me," the telegram commanded. . . . Would she go?

Driving over in the early morning he had pondered the matter. And he decided, though

it cost double the other price, to put his horse up at the Bayview Inn.

He took the middle route to Atherton, across what the Islanders call the Plains, wide flatlands covered with a level growth of scrub oak that glistens like water in the sun, and through which the one sandy road winds monotonously. Here the Island resembles a wilderness, for there is no settlement between Bridgewater and Atherton. Jim Brant slowly drove his horse, rented by the "company" from Bijah Baxter, through the stifling sand until well into the middle of the morning, stopping only twice, once to gaze, as he always did, at a pile of enormous stones heaped up in a field by his own tribe in memory of a missionary who had come to them, and once to gather a pailful of huckleberries to supplement his luncheon. But he thought all the way about the telegram. Who was Warrington? Did Lieutenant Hawthorne know about him too?

At eleven o'clock he drove into the quaint streets of Atherton, past the livery stable, into which Bijah Baxter's horse tried to go, and up

to the old inn on the bluff. There he baited the animal and went about his business, which was to see a certain man about barrels.

At two o'clock, having transacted the business and eaten his luncheon on the wharf, he set out for a stroll about the town. He had not seen a person he knew, except two fishermen and a stable boy.

At half past four he turned into a green lane where there was a place called a "tea-room," visited; he knew, by off-islanders. Everyone else would know that tea in the middle of the afternoon spoiled your supper; but it was fortunate for the people on the Island that some folks were queer. The Indian half-breed had no intention of buying tea—it was always brewing, anyway, on the back of the Baxters' stove. But he hated to return to Bridgewater until he had found whether or not she came.

Then, almost immediately he saw her. She was coming toward him from the other end of the lane, and with her was a man with a brown pointed beard. She was dressed in white, as usual, and she wore a black hat. But there

was something different about her. There was no scarlet bouquet at her belt. Jim Brant had never before seen her away from her house without one.

She and the man with the brown beard were talking together, the latter very earnestly. The Geranium Lady did not say much, or smile. Suddenly the man saw the tea-room sign.

"Ah, here is the place," he said, touching her elbow. "Let us go in, dear, and rest. You are tired."

"I guess I am," Jim heard her say. Then she added with her quick laugh, "I mean, Tony,—I 'calculate'!"

With that they went into the little tea-house, not having seen Jim Brant.

The half-breed went back to the Bayview Inn, and paid the high price for the stabling of his horse. It was even more than he had expected. But he did not mind. It was for Lieutenant Hawthorne.

He had learned a great deal in two days—it was only night before last that he brought the

letter—but as it happened, this was not all. One meeting of June Carver and the man who could call her “dear” might have been put down as an exception. He knew that, though he did not express it that way. But there were others. The next week, after receiving two thick letters, she had gone to Atherton again, two days in succession. He heard that upon inquiry of the stage-driver, who had taken her to the Port, and from the chauffeur of the automobile ’bus that runs between the summer resort and Atherton.

So Jim Brant, too, had a problem to solve. And he did not know of the Geranium Lady’s theory about the rain. If he had known it would have done little good, for there was a spell of clear weather! He felt sure that the man from the *Alaska* did not know about “Warrington.” How was it possible for so pretty and kind a young lady—even though she was an off-islander—to deceive anyone, that was the question. Above all, how could she deceive Miles Hawthorne? . . .

It was late when the moon set. Dark red it

sank backward into a brassy cloud. Not until then did the Indian's body relax. He sat down wearily on the sand, looking around him on the dark beach almost as if he wondered to find himself there. Far out on the water a porgy boat pulled in her haul and chugged away.

CHAPTER VIII

JUNE COMES BEAUTIFULLY TO LONG POINT FARM

AFTER the supper party for two at the Betty Latch Cottage other social events began to occur on the Island. They were of some frequency and gaiety,—without counting those at Atherton. Miles Hawthorne and the Geranium Lady climbed Indian Hill, from the top of which one might see the whole Island. They went together to a church fair in Bridgewater, and were invited to take part in tableaux, to be given for the benefit of fishermen's children. They paid Captain Madison a call that ended in their staying for tea, which June insisted on making, for the old sailor lived alone except for what he called his visitations from his daughter-in-law. The old and the young man helped her get the supper, and the tiny, immaculate cottage rang with their laughter.

Mrs. Bartlett, seizing the opportunity of Mr. Bartlett's absence on the mainland, asked them to "spend the evening."

Then there was the trip to Great Cliffs, which stayed long in the memory of both of them. For it the Admiral was ignominiously harnessed and made to pull a runabout. Starting in the early morning of a brilliant day, they drove twelve miles according to Captain Madison's directions, the road for the most part following the ocean, but rising farther and farther above it. Here there was no beach, but green fields dropping to a pebbly shore that, as they neared the cliffs, became rocky. Miles Hawthorne had known most of the famous marine drives of the old world, but he told June there was none more wonderful than this. She could not judge for herself, having made few stops on the way to Calcutta!

So fleet was the Admiral that in the middle of the morning they climbed on to the promontory, having the Sound now on the right, the ocean on the left, and presently drove into the settlement that clusters at the end. It is

high in the air, just before the plunge into the sea. At the cliff's edge are the lighthouse and the United States life-saving station.

The Cliffers, as they are called on the Island, are an isolated people keeping to themselves in their birds'-nest village. They are Indian and negro half-breeds, who form as distinct a type as do the Portuguese and the few full-blooded Indians left in this home of many races. They make pottery from the brilliant clays of the cliffs. As Lieutenant Hawthorne and June passed through the village the women came to their doorways, the men paused in the fields, and the dogs barked. A group of children stood by the roadside and looked up, wondering, into the girl's face. She tossed them the red flowers at her belt.

"But I have so many," she said, at Hawthorne's protest.

"They seem to me to be part of you," he replied.

At the first sight of the cliffs June gasped. They stood together at the edge of the precipice at a point that jutted out so that they

could look along the sea-facing rocks. Far below the ocean lay, rippling, the horizon far distant because of their great height, and making a three-quadrant arc. The tiny waves lapped the very feet of the headland. But it was not the height that was so astonishing. From bottom to crest the cliffs were gay with colors,—yellow and violet, deep gray, many-tinted reds, and chalk white.

They did not attempt the descent at first, for the tide was too high, and there were the lighthouse and the life-saving station to be visited. This took some time, for Hawthorne and Captain Jasper of the station struck up a friendship that rapidly increased when, on the Captain's observing, "I cal'late ye've be'n to sea, sir," Hawthorne replied with his customary brevity at such times, "Yes, the Navy." At that Captain Jasper insisted that the surfmen should go through the life-boat drill, for June.

Later they returned to the cliffs. An enormous gash made a steep descent possible. Again June said nothing when Hawthorne started

down what seemed a perilous way ahead of her, though she turned pale, once, when he slipped. In the more difficult places he gave her his hand, and once when she hesitated an instant he looked at her so sternly that she quaked like an insubordinate seamen. "You aren't afraid, are you?" he asked, proudly. "I shall not let you fall!"

It was at the foot of the promontory that they had the talk both remembered. Some remark of the girl's about the Clifiers reminded Hawthorne of Jim Brant.

"The fellow's a problem," he told her, as he threw a stone as far as he could into the water. "Every time I see him there is some new phase."

"What has he been doing now?" inquired the Geranium Lady. She sat on a rock with her chin cupped in her hands.

"He asks me the most ridiculous questions." Hawthorne came and stood looking down at her. There were advantages about riding beside her in the runabout that made it harder to do without them. "I can't think," he went

on, "where he digs such posers up. The other day it was the distance to the moon. And now he wants to know if I have ever heard of a man called Tony Warrington!" he laughed. "Comical name!"

The Geranium Lady came near falling off her rock.

"How funny!" she said.

"But that isn't the queerest part. He told me to ask you."

"And do you know anyone named Tony Warrington?" she inquired.

"No. Do you?"

"No," she said, raising her beautiful eyes to his with a frank smile, "I don't, Mr. Hawthorne. But I agree with you—that's a very queer question."

"Though it's not important,"—he returned the smile—"in comparison with some others."

"For instance?"

He paused, and looked off at the water.

"I've been wondering," he said, "if you have remembered your promise."

"Yes," she answered in a low voice, sweet

the floor at her feet. "Let there be light," he beamed.

She looked up at the tall, silent man.

"I love it!" she said softly.

He, too, looked around him, almost gently.

"I think I'm beginning to," he answered.

She took off her hat and patted her hair. He accepted the hat, a floppy, flowery, white one, as if he thought it might break, and carried it out to the hall table. When he came back she was sitting by the window in a cozy little mahogany rocker with a creak and a limp in its gait.

"Who ever heard of a man's having a chair like this?" she laughed.

"Nobody. I never sit in it—good reason why. But it's—it's a nice one to have around, don't you think so? It's rather—homelike."

She crossed her feet and looked up with her frank smile.

"Yes," she said; "please save it for me whenever I come."

"It just plainly demands a woman to sit and sew, with the sun shining in a window,

doesn't it? I like it because it reminds me of my mother. She always sat in one of that kind."

"And she had a tall work-basket standing beside it, too, didn't she, full of long stockings and little blue shirts?"

"Now how did you know that?"

Because it goes with the chair, and with the way I imagine your mother."

"She was absurdly young," said Miles Hawthorne, looking past the girl, now, as if at some gentle presence she could not see, "even when she died—while I was at Annapolis. She was just a girl when I—wore the little blue shirts! She played with me and my friends like a boy. And she was a good sport. She used to teach us things, to stand up for each other, and by our own word, and not to howl when we got hit."

June nodded.

"I just knew she was like that."

He hesitated. "Would you like to see her?" he asked.

She glanced at the bare walls.

"Yes," she said softly.

He went to the ancient desk in the corner, where there were writing materials in significant order, and unlocked a little inner drawer. Taking out a wine-colored velvet case he opened it and handed it to June, who stood to receive it. He turned away swiftly himself, and looked out of the window.

"Somehow, I knew she was like that," the girl repeated, breaking the silence. "I knew she was beautiful and brave."

"That's an old picture my father had before they were married," he told her from the window. "She gave him to the service you know. He never saw me. . . . But she always looked like this. It's the best one, because she's smiling. . . . I'm glad to have you see it," he added. "Very glad."

"And I thank you for showing it to me," answered June.

He came and took it from her, instantly snapping shut the case.

"You are the only woman for whom I've done as much," he said.

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At the desk again he suddenly laughed.

"There's another picture here, I remember, that you may see if you like."

She stood beside him and watched in spite of herself the strong scarred hand lightly touch the little velvet cases. He gave her the smallest.

"Isn't that a handsome suit?"

"Oh," breathed June Carver, "what a little, little boy! How did you manage to grow so big with no more of a start than that?" Her eyes shone. "And what an extraordinary jacket! But you're so severe for such a baby. If you had smiled a little you would have looked just like your mother."

"I had to live up to that jacket."

"Do you know what I think?" she asked him. "I should have liked that little boy."

"I hope so." As he took the picture from her her eyes followed the erect little figure in the quaint clothes. "You can see—can't you, —how sleepy he looks? That was the cause of the solemnity. I remember being grieved because they wouldn't let me be photographed

with my head comfortably on the arm of the chair. . . . Oh, that little boy was often bad. Later he fought a good deal."

"But—but he didn't howl when he got hit."

"No. But then, that isn't much, because he always felt like it—inside."

"Isn't much!" She leaned forward and put her hand on the child in the picture, as if she somehow could not help it. "Why, I like him all the better now, because—because that's everything! And it's all the better that he didn't know—it's everything."

When she withdrew her hand Miles Hawthorne took the picture and put it with his mother's in the drawer.

"I think," he told her, "that you—like—the whole world, that's all—and come wonderfully near understanding it."

Outside the sun slanted low; within the fire sank down and had begun to glow in red coals before the flop of Sally's feet on the sandy road announced the arrival of Captain Madison and Mrs. Bartlett. They were really very late. Bone had repeatedly thrust his head out of

the dining-room window to look for them. But June Carver and Lieutenant Hawthorne did not seem to mind the lateness of the guests or the rather unconventional situation. He had drawn the mahogany rocker to the fireside for her and then sat down opposite. "We must put it to its proper use," he said. However, when Captain Madison stopped before the door he did not interrupt a conversation, for they had been very quiet indeed since June said she liked the little boy who was so bad.

They went to the door together, both suddenly rather afraid of Captain Madison. But the skipper, stumping in behind Mrs. Bartlett, with his customary twinkle, said nothing very alarming.

"Wal', wal'," he remarked as he stood on the leopard's skin, while June assisted Mrs. Bartlett with an astonishing bonnet. "This be a snug harbor, Cap'n Hawthorne. Ye orter be purty happy in it."

"I am!" said the man from the *Alaska* with emphasis.

Then Bone with his most pompous air an-

nounced supper, Blake appeared from wherever he had mysteriously kept himself, and they went into the dining-room.

At the head of the table was an old silver teapot and service, shining with many polishings, though finely scratched and bearing one or two dents. It obviously did not go with the farm.

“Will you sit here, and pour the tea?” Hawthorne asked the Geranium Lady.

And as she slipped into the chair she knew without being told that the teapot had belonged to the girl whose little boy wore blue shirts, and didn't howl when he got hit, and grew up to look just like her. When he took his place across from her at the table the two rose spots came into her cheeks. She softly touched the old teapot. For she was remembering what he had said. . . . He had not done as much for any other woman living.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY OF THE SOUTH BEACH, AND OTHER MATTERS

It was a most successful party. From Bone's clam fritters to the strawberry ice-cream, of whose mysteries Blake and the master of Long Point himself were suspected of knowing more than they told, the supper was a triumph. Everyone ate all he could, and laughed a great deal. Mrs. Bartlett, who wore a fresh black and blue calico, this time from the top of the eternal pile, even had to be slapped upon the back by Blake by way of recovering from Hawthorne's narrative of his gardening difficulties. Captain Madison's twinkle was not once eclipsed. And the Geranium Lady smiled behind the silver teapot, with her beautiful eyes soft and shining.

After supper, when they returned to the

living-room and drew around the fire which Blake rebuilt, Captain Madison requested Hawthorne to "spin a real yarn" and show the women folk what one was like. And in response, leaning against a book-case in the shadow of the chimney-corner, facing June, he told a tale he knew she would like, of the East, with details of brilliant color and uncouth sound, of nights where the burning stars look as if you could touch them, and of mornings that dawn "out of China" beyond a bay. The story had the accident of ending badly, a fact which he reluctantly remembered half-way through, and for which he apologized as introducing a discordant note.

"Oh," breathed June, leaning back in her chair when he had finished, "I love it, and I hate it! Why did it have to end that way?"

"Didn't you hear him say it was a true story?" asked Mrs. Bartlett grimly.

"Yes!"

"Now ye're all wrong there, Mindwell Hart," interrupted Captain Madison, who had known Mrs. Bartlett before her descent to Mr. Bart-

lett's plane. "Ye're clear over on yer port tack when ye orter be at starb'd. It's so a'mighty common fer true stories to end good that when they don't we generally put it in the noos-paper. Don't ye go instillin' pernicious idees into young folks' heads. You ask Cap'n Hawthorne. He's seen the world."

"There's no doubt," said the man from the *Alaska* lightly, "that plenty of bad endings get into the newspapers. You see, Mrs. Bartlett, the good ones aren't usually so exciting."

But June Carver, in spite of Captain Madison's cheerful philosophy, had turned grave. It was not altogether the unfortunate story; something had been making her quiet before that. Hawthorne almost thought she was what she least seemed to be—nervous. What else should make her foot go tap, tap on the leopard's skin, and cause her to start when a log fell apart?

A silence came after Hawthorne had given his opinion of tragic endings. With it they all became conscious at once of the sound that was abroad in the night. The deep note of the surf on the Beach had swelled during supper into

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a fuller booming, until it was not to be ignored. In the pause June twisted in her chair—the mahogany rocker—and stared at the windows, the darkened panes of which were not curtained.

“That’s an ugly growling,” she said in a low voice. “I’m glad we’re not any nearer. Just to think of the water out there, black and tumbling, makes me shudder. . . . Mr. Hawthorne, I saw a book on your shelves that as a good sailor you ought not to have, because there’s a song in it all about—

“‘Over the monstrous shambling sea
Over the Caliban sea’—

and—‘Over the humped and fishy sea,’ and oh, yes,—‘the huge and huddling sea!’ Ugh! I’m glad to be in here, tonight, by this fire and not down on the Beach!”

Miles Hawthorne watched her from his shadow. He still stood leaning against the bookshelves. He and Captain Madison were smoking. It was strange that she, too, had caught the weird note of clamoring, as he had, in the sound so familiar to the Islanders as to be

hardly more remarkable than wind in pine-trees or a matter-of-fact mill-dam.

“’Tisn’t the thought of the ocean I mind,” said Mrs. Bartlett, looking over her shoulder. There seemed to have been contagion in the girl’s mood. “I think the surf’s a grand sight. But I never did like to recollect all that sand goin’ to waste—fifteen miles and more and nobody on it. Seems kinder bleak when you just set and think about it.”

“Nobody on it!” commented Captain Madison, and chuckled.

“I never could see,” went on Mrs. Bartlett, “why you wanted to take and live where you do, when you come ashore for good, Noah Madison.” The Captain bore this ancient seafaring name. “Clear the tother side of nowhere, and nearer the shore, I calculate, than this house. You must have a roarin’ in your ears pretty nigh all the time, not to speak of bein’ too near for comfort to such a sight of sand.”

“It’s cur’ous,” said Captain Madison, nodding his head toward the window, “what a general feelin’ there is on this here Island about

the South Beach. It's purty vague, but it's a'mighty real." He stopped and listened critically to the pounding waves. "I don't cal'late that's such rough water," he observed aside to Hawthorne. "It's the tide at flood. Ye see," he turned to June, "there's summat allays happenin' on it."

"On the Beach?" she asked.

"Yes. Leastways, if anythin' doos happen on the Island it's most generally there, or in Deep Bottom. It don' seem so frequent to young folks, but if ye knew the history o' the Island ye'd find it purty regular. The last time were in my father's day. I've often heard him tell of it."

"'Nobody on it,' you said just then, Noah Madison, disdainful like," said Mrs. Bartlett. "I hope you don't believe *that* story. Harken now! That come with a rush! . . . We're in a strange way tonight, gettin' the jumpin' cats, as Bartlett says, over a bit of surf a-roarin'. Perhaps it's a sign."

"What was it that happened in your father's day?" asked June.

"It's the story I were goin' to tell ye onct," said the skipper, "when ye didn't care so much to hear it. It's about summat my father found on the Beach, an' how it come there."

Captain Madison knocked out his pipe on the hearth and settled himself in his chair. Lieutenant Hawthorne joined the circle, with his back to the fire. Mrs. Bartlett and June Carver drew a little nearer each other, while Blake dispelled the deep shadows that had fallen over the room by stirring the flames to an orange glow.

"It were seventy-five year back," began Captain Madison, "when my father were a boy o' fifteen an' none of us here was born. He used to tell us lads about it mebbe twice a year, when there were a tempest at night, or the water come in roarin' high arter a storm at sea. There wa'n't any other yarn we liked as well. An' he allays begun it the same way. 'It were a gray an' gusty mornin',' he'd say, jest like that. 'It were a gray an' gusty mornin' in the fall o' the year.' . . ."

The Captain's sea-blue eyes rested on the

flames in meditation. June Carver leaned forward and spread out her hands to the warmth with a little shiver.

"Are you cold?" Hawthorne asked in a low voice. But she shook her head.

"Between five an' six o'clock on that there gusty mornin'," continued Captain Madison finally, "my father were down on the South Beach with his gun thinkin' he might be able to shoot some ducks before breakfast. It were a dark day with a dirty sea, runnin' choppy. He followed the shore o' the Great Pawnd at fust, an' arter that he took to the Beach. But he didn't hev no kind o' luck. Only see a few ducks, an' them very wild.

"Howsomever, he see hundreds o' gulls streakin' about in great circles an' screechin' like sperits in torment. Never see so many at one time or hear sech a noise. An' as he walked along it seemed like there were a great cloud o' them far down the Beach wheelin' over one spot. It made him mighty cur'ous, bein' a queer sight. For no such racket were ever made over a dead fish. So he went down

the Beach toward the place, wonderin' what he mebbe might find.

"The gulls took flight an' streaked off over the water with their screamin', an' my father looked around. He see nothin' unusual at fust. An' all he finally lit on were a small dark crooked thing, like the j'int in a tree, stickin' outer the sand. He went an' looked at it close. An' if it wa'n't clothed! . . . It were a man's knee, in blue breeches, comin' outer the Beach!"

Hawthorne's ejaculation satisfied even the Captain. The Geranium Lady's eyes were dark.

"Yes, sir. True as I live. A man's knee an' nothin' else it were. The wind had blown the sand smooth round it, and raised a little drift on one side. It looked as if somebody, sleepin' sound, had humped it up fer to be more comfortable. But my father knew dead muscles oftentimes contract, an' that were what had happened, causin' the leg to rise up summat afore the last day out of a fearful shallow grave. So he took a stick o' driftwood, an' dug round

a bit. An' sure enough. A man had be'n buried there by some un in a terrible hurry, an' only a short time before. He were a young man, a sailor, an' a furriner.

"Wal', fer some time arter it were a considerable mystery on the Island. An' my father had to tell the story over an' over, an' p'int out the spot. Everybody had some explanation they thought were just the right un till someun else up an' thought of another. A watch were set at Atherton an' the Port, in case the murderer hadn't yet left the Island. An' they dug up the body an' buried it at sea.

"In them days it took a sight o' time fer news to travel, so it were quite a spell before from this un an' that un bits of information come up an' was pieced together until finally there were a clue here an' there that might be called important. But even then there wa'n't much an' it did seem as if the dead man must hev killed an' buried himself.

"Howsomever, 'bout a month arter my father went duck-shootin' on the Beach the family heard that, jest three days before the body

were found, a revenue cutter flyin' an English jack had be'n seen off the south shore. She hadn't landed at either the Port or Atherton, nor be'n seen sence. An' o' course that made a deal o' talk when it were once remembered. Then, a week later, an old fisherman came down from Shamawna Bight to see my father. An' he had a queer story to tell. He said that in the early mornin' o' the day that turned out to be the one arter the furrin bo't were seen, two men come knockin' on his door. He lived by himself in a shanty on the Bight. They ast him to row 'em across the Sound to the mainland fer a sum o' money. He didn't like the job, nor them either, but they showed him gold, an' he done it. He had the coins with him to show to my father. They was English sovereigns, ten of 'em; but the men wa'n't English. The fisherman swore to that.

“Wal', wal', that were absolutely all anybody knew 'bout the whole thing fer a matter o' ten year or thereabouts. Then fin'ly a man on the mainland died an' told the rest on it—to save his soul from fire. He were an

Like enough they did come back again and take it away with 'em. But don't expect me to believe a dead man digs down there! And if anyone else is looking for gold he's a fool for his pains. That's what I say."

"Oh, Captain Madison, what a story!" exclaimed June Carver. "There was once a man that lived in the South Sea who could have made a book out of that!"

"I cal'late he could uv," grinned the skipper, who knew his *Treasure Island*. "And it's true as preachin'."

"And he would have called those waves 'the merry men' instead of such bad names as I quoted out of Mr. Hawthorne's book, and said that they danced and not shambled. Just listen to their shouting! The story has quite cheered me up! Adventure always does. Just the same I am very glad to be in here by this comfortable fire."

William Blake bounded out of his chair to replenish the hearth. All the evening he had appeared to believe that the Geranium Lady was a wonderful person who visited common

mortals seldom and when she came should be appropriately served. With the mounting flames, which soon touched with yellow the farthest corners of the room, the odd mood was dispelled as unaccountably as it came. They all sat in quiet intimate content watching the fire—all, that is, but Hawthorne, who watched June. Once she looked across at him, with an expression no one, he least of all, could see, and then quickly away.

But Mrs. Bartlett finally rose with an inexorable eye.

"It's time to go home, Noah," she announced. "There'll be a scandal around if we traipse out so late and Bartlett away."

With the aid of the lamp the astonishing bonnet was found, as well as June's flowery hat. Lieutenant Hawthorne helped her into her coat. Captain Madison stumped off after Sally, and Bone brought up the Admiral. The Geranium Lady suddenly began to blunder with blurred eyes for the buttons of

her coat, and Hawthorne bent to help her. When he finished he met her eyes with a smile.

Captain Madison, coming back into the hall, completely changed the subject.

"Has Jim Brant asked ye any more posers lately?" he inquired of Hawthorne. But he was talking with June.

"No," he answered, "I think not."

"Aren't you going to tell me you've had a good time?" he asked her. "Mrs. Bartlett has said so. . . . Blake is—is going to drive you home. You will be quite safe with him and the Admiral."

She held out her hand.

"It's been a beautiful party," she said. "And to think it's—over!"

He went out with them and with great care helped her into the runabout—beside William Blake.

"You will remember to be careful on the Deep Bottom road," he commanded the secretary briefly.

Captain Madison started first, with many

farewells from Mrs. Bartlett. Blake gathered the reins over the Admiral's back.

"Good-bye," said June Carver in a thin small voice as he grasped her hand. "I—I have something to tell you—soon," she added, and was gone in the night.

CHAPTER X

A TEMPEST AND WHAT HAPPENED DURING IT

THERE had been a storm rising the evening June Carver listened with distrust to the "Caliban sea." A most remarkable summer tempest it was called. Gathering slowly and with threatening deliberation, at the end of twenty-four hours the wind blew half a gale, and a driving rain commenced. There was a three days' downpour with a continuation of the lashing wind and a tumultuous surf on the Beach. People kept to their houses, telling stories of the November Gale, and agreeing as to the unseasonableness of the weather. There was little work done on the Island. Some of the men and boys, dressed in oilskins, went to the Beach to see the giant waves. The Gernium Lady and Lieutenant Hawthorne had gone down the first day.

On the morning of the fourth day the rain ceased, the sun came out, rather bleary-eyed but welcome in any condition, and the tempest was over. However, it gave the people of Bridgewater something to talk about for many a week, though as it happened they did not, just now, stand in need of a topic. For the torch of rumor had been kindled, in spite of the dampness of the weather. It was tossed quickly from hand to hand, flaring high.

There was a small gathering in Bartlett's store the morning after the storm. It had drifted together ostensibly to discuss the recent havoc, but really to talk of something different. Mrs. Bartlett, work being slack, sat sewing behind the counter in the lee of the calicoes, where she could keep an eye on Mr. Bartlett's grandson, not hers. Miss Boles had stepped across from the post-office, her skirts held high out of the mud. The stage-driver, Mr. Weatherwax, whittled a stick on to the clean floor, in spite of Mrs. Bartlett's nervous glances. And Jim Brant sat on a cracker-

barrel, his dark face wearing a scowl that made the timid Samuel shrink whenever he encountered it.

“Well, I *am* glad to talk it over,” Miss Boles was saying as she removed her fascinator. “What I should have done I don’t know if I hadn’t been able to say somethin’ to somebody soon. Of course in my business one must be *most* discreet. But there is a limit, as it were, to human endurance. I never should uv said a word, though, if Mr. Weatherwax here hadn’t begun it. Twice a week and oftener those letters comin’, so regular they make me nervous, and him like as not in the office at the same time, smilin’ at me and sayin’, ‘I’ll take Miss Carver’s mail, too, if you please, Miss Boles,’ though most of it comes at night and Jim here carries it down. I declare to you it don’t seem just right to give them to him—I mean Captain Hawthorne. Twice I’ve kept a letter back for Jim, though for all I know it’s a state’s prison offence—”

Miss Boles paused for breath.

Mrs. Bartlett sewed fast. “But you didn’t

know then who wrote 'em," she said in her abrupt way, "or that *he* didn't know."

"You can say that, Mrs. Bartlett; I did and I didn't. I've got so's I notice a sight of things, havin' 'em under my nose, as it were. It's a lucky thing for Bridgewater and the Cove that I'm close mouthed, that's all I say. When those letters begun to come to Miss Carver I said to myself, 'It's a man writin' 'em.' It's none of my business, thinks I, of course; but when I saw how she was carryin' on with Captain Hawthorne it set me ponderin' some more. She seems like a nice girl, though I can't see as she's so uncommon as the men folks think, but if those letters come from a man, she's too free with *him*. That is for his own good she's too free. . . . Then the telegram come, and I was sure of my bearin's. And she *went* to Atherton, for I asked Mr. Weatherwax."

"Wouldn't ha' thought to notice her comin's an' goin's," said Mr. Weatherwax, repudiating the charge that he had begun it, "only Miss Boles an' Jim they axed me so solemn an' secret."

"Then you're the first man on this Island *not* to notice her, Mr. Weatherwax," declared the postmistress.

"Even so," replied the stage-driver.

"Of course," continued Miss Boles, who had a cousin who was a lawyer, "we have no *direct* proof that she went to Atherton, the first three times to meet this man, Warrington, but we have circumstantial evidence. The telegram come. She went. That's enough for them who can see through a barn door when it's wide open."

Jim Brant at this moment crossed his legs over the other way as he sat on the barrel.

"It was then that you asked Captain Hawthorne, wasn't it, Jim," put in Mrs. Bartlett, "if he knew a man named Warrington?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And he said he didn't, didn't he?"

"No, ma'am. He laughed an' says I'd hev to ast him another."

"Which means the same thing," Miss Boles caught up the torch. Mrs. Bartlett bent over her sewing again. Her sallow face was creased

anxiously this morning, or perhaps she had drawn her hair back a trifle more tightly when she rose to get Mr. Bartlett's breakfast.

"She went to Atherton three times three weeks ago to be with that man," said Miss Boles, shaking her finger at Mr. Weatherwax and Samuel as if she were addressing a jury, "and then she went to the Cliffs with Captain Hawthorne, and acted in tableaux with him, and went to Long Point and et the ice-cream he helped make himself, for William Blake told me he did, it was strawberry."

"'Tain't a crime," put in Mr. Weatherwax moderately, "ter act in tabbylows, or eat pink ice-cream, that ever I hear on."

"That all depends," Miss Boles crushed swiftly. "It has *always* been considered significant in Bridgewater for a young lady and gentleman to act 'John Alden and Priscilla.' And everybody knows they did it very realistic. For my part he was the handsomest 'John Alden' that ever I saw."

"Or I," said Mrs. Bartlett.

"If I had knew," complained Mr. Weather-

wax, "that there'd be any such ructions as this here, I wouldn't hev told ye about it."

"It was queer enough," Miss Boles refused to linger over a digression, "to carry on so—I mean makin' those three trips—in pleasant weather. But to go again, twice, in a pourin' rain, and on the seven-o'clock mornin' stage at that,—well, it's beyond me, that's all I've got to say!"

"All buttoned up in a stylish waterproof, she were," reflected Mr. Weatherwax, "an' a green veil like. 'S'I, 'Ye're not leavin' us, Miss Carver,' fer she carried a valise. 'Oh, no, Mr. Weatherwax,' says she, 'what a fearful tempest.'"

"She come back on the nine-o'clock stage," remarked Mrs. Bartlett.

"She did."

"Both nights?" asked Jim Brant.

"Yes; cert'in. Both nights."

Mr. Weatherwax's brick-red face turned a darker shade, and he began to whittle a new stick, looking hostilely at Jim Brant from under the penthouse of bristling hairs that over-

hung his eyes, as well as sprouted out of his sunburnt ears.

"Cert'in she did," he repeated with emphasis. "One o' them flowers in her button-hole, too," he added irrelevantly, to fill in the silence.

"Where did the man meet her?" asked Mrs. Bartlett.

"At the end o' the rout'," grumbled the stage-driver. "He carried a bag, too, an' they run fer the Atherton 'bus. The wind nigh on ter blowed 'em over. But I heard him say, 'Too bad this here happened, but it couldn't be put off.' 'No,' she says, 'course not. Let's run,' she says. He were a middle-age man 'bout my build," added Mr. Weatherwax, "with a brown beard on his face."

Jim Brant rose from the barrel with a sudden violence that made everyone jump.

"My land, Jim!" cried Miss Boles.

"It's gotta stop!" the half-breed thundered in his deep vibrating voice.

"If it were anyone else," Mrs. Bartlett looked up with eyes she did not have for Samuel, "I

should say more shame to us to gossip so. But him—”

Hawthorne had kept his promise to take Mrs. Bartlett sailing in the *Sitka*. That was before she had invited him and June to spend the evening. In fact he had done something for everyone present in the store that morning. He had given Miss Boles a handsome map that now helped lessen the bareness of the new post-office. Samuel daily expanded with pride over the ownership of the “spyglass” that the man from the *Alaska* insisted he really did not want. And Mr. Weatherwax would not think of smoking a box of cigars Hawthorne had handed him, taking out one for himself with the remark, “You keep the rest Mr. Weatherwax. If I have more I smoke too many.”

“It wouldn’t do,” Miss Boles reflected, “for someone to speak to him, would it?”

Mrs. Bartlett shook her head.

Jim Brant towered above them darkly. “It’s gotta stop!” he repeated loudly. “If it don’t, then by God I’ll stop it!”

Knocking over the barrel he had sat on, the

half-breed flung out of Bartlett's store, slamming the door behind him.

He brushed past Captain Madison on his way in.

"Wal', wal'," drawled the old man, "what's all this, Mindy? What's all this? I want five pounds o' sugar."

Miss Boles rose and assumed the fascinator.

"I'll be goin'," she remarked briefly.

"Don't let me scare ye all away," said Captain Madison. "I'll jest set a bit an' discuss this here tempestuous weather we be'n havin'. Anythin' disastrous down your way, Mr. Weatherwax?"

"Talk about disasters," remarked Miss Boles at the door. "Some folks don't know 'em when they see 'em!"

CHAPTER XI

THE SCARLET GARDEN

THE tenant of Long Point Farm was serenely unaware of his popularity in the village, but he had been touched to the quick by the kindness shown him. He had expected to spend these months of rest—what was to come after he did not know—in lonely isolation. This he had vastly preferred to the restrictions of a sanitarium, or the permiscuous curiosity of a hotel. The event on the *Alaska* had been published in the newspapers, with other “bad endings,” and he had been dismayed to find himself rather well known. On the Island, however, it somehow did not matter if people had, curiously enough, learned of his own private adventure with certain eternal entities, such as life and light and night and death. Next to Halleck and the other men who held his own

stern code—that he had done only his plain duty—the Islanders were the only people whose interest he did not mind. He did not exactly know why this was true, unless it was that their life—that of the men particularly—being buffeted by elemental things, had a largeness in spite of the narrow limits of the Island that deepened understanding and purified sympathy, their very insularity working to this end; for simplicity intensifies the spirit, as the sun's rays focused burn, while diffused they dazzle. Therefore he had never rebuffed the tactful advances of these good people, and considered that he made but inadequate return by the various small acts that cemented the villagers' affection. He would have been surprised indeed if he had known how wide and deep that affection was.

June Carver, the Geranium Lady of Bijah's Cove, was the one exception—not counting the officers and men of the *Alaska*—in his general condemnation of the attitude of off-islanders as a whole. But she was the one exception in all the world, where no previously known rules

applied. A man might know the whole science of navigation, so that he could come into a strange port, so to speak, in the dark, and yet where she was concerned drift in a tugging current as inexorable as life itself. Hawthorne has spent the three days after he had taken June Carver to the Beach to see the storm waves in the discovery of this current. As he helped steady her against the confounding uproar of wind and water he had felt it. And since then it had borne him a long way, farther than he knew.

On the evening of the fourth day, in the morning of which there had been at Bartlett's store so odd a council in his interest, he mounted the Admiral and to the enormous relief of Blake and Bone started for Bijah's Cove. She had said she had something to tell him "soon." This was soon. He was ready to hear it, now, whatever it might be. And anything was better than sitting at Long Point Farm—where a mahogany rocker and a silver teapot made a man think queer things—obliged to keep William Blake busy, and listening, listening to

the rain on the roof. It had the past and the future in it she had said! He did not much care for the past or the future. For to one idea he held fast. That which was broken could not be offered as if it were whole. More especially it could not when it happened to be a man's career, or his life,—or both. If he could not, for instance, so much as read his own mail, he could still play the man.

The windows of the Betty Latch Cottage looked as ruddy as her scarlet garden did by daylight when Hawthorne dismounted before the door. It was later than he usually arrived. The sun had gone early into the cloud bank behind the oaks. June Carver did not answer his knock. It was Hannah who let the stream of light flood out upon the Admiral and his master.

"She's here," remarked the henchwoman briefly to his "Good-evening." "You can come in."

Hawthorne followed her into the gay little sitting-room, where an old brass lamp with a yellow shade lighted every corner. He felt as if he had been a long time away.

"You can sit down," said Hannah grudgingly.

Hawthorne turned and looked at her keenly. She had not added, "You poor fool," but that was in the tone of her voice, he thought.

"See here, Hannah," he said, suddenly laying his hand on her polka-dotted sleeve; "you don't like me at all, do you?"

The woman looked down at his hand.

"If I'd had my way," she whispered, "it wouldn't have happened!" and strode out of the room.

Then in came the Geranium Lady with her hand out. Hawthorne held it a little too long, wondering what in the world Hannah meant. He also wished to look at June's gown, which was soft and crêpey and green. It was the first color he had seen her wear, and he liked it, though it made her seem pale, he thought.

"I've come country style with an offering in my saddle-bags," he told her, releasing her hand. "Shall I go and get it at once?"

She went out with him while he triumphantly unpacked his gift.

"Why—why, it's a cucumber!" she exclaimed.

"Three," he said gravely; "the very first thing, except weeds, that grew in my garden."

"Oh, thank you!" She held the rather diminutive vegetables tightly against her green gown. "I—I think they are perfectly splendid cucumbers!" she told him earnestly.

When they returned to the house he saw that she was different tonight from any other June he had known. First of all she was tired. Her steady buoyancy was subdued. It was as if some conflict had worn upon her and fearfully wearied her, yet she had an unquenchable defiance. She was gay, in little spurts that were entirely spontaneous, though brief. At those times, he thought during the evening, she seemed caught by some glad wind and whirled to a joyous height. She was near quick tears; then all in a moment distant, and from that distance tender, with a sweetness— And all the time he waited for her to tell him what she had to tell him "soon."

June drew her chintz curtains with their parading peacocks, and sat down by the yellow lamp.

"Is Long Point Farm still there," she asked him, "or is it blown away?"

"The old house rocked that second night," he answered.

"I thought about you—and William Blake and Captain Madison. It seemed dreadful to be so near."

"It really isn't a great hardship to be safe in bed, ashore, during a storm! Of course there was a racket, but I hope we'll have another gale tomorrow, if that will make you think about us."

"It will," she smiled.

"I should rather be on the bridge in a hurricane," he went on, propping a magazine against the lamp, "than sit inside and listen to the seven devils of the sea shriek down the chimney. On the third day I really thought I'd walk up here to see you, but I didn't dare deluge Hannah's kitchen, and I was afraid you'd shut me in New South Wales in the dark to dry."

"Hannah would have."

"So Blake and I patrolled the Beach, and I

took him across the Pond in the *Sitka*. I really thought he would die of fright."

"Poor William!"

"A derelict was washed up on the shore, and a couple of trees have blown down in my front yard. I think that's all the news. Oh, yes, I ran out of tobacco—the boat didn't come across with the mail the day my cargo was expected. But, then, there was the—the rain on the roof. . . ."

She nodded.

"So I tried your theory. And do you know, I think it works very well."

"Do—do you?"

"I heard about a thousand voices, all saying the same thing."

"How odd! Mine all say something different."

"And how about you?"

She looked a little startled.

"What—do you mean?"

"Did you get your problem solved, during the rain?"

"Oh!" she said, bringing her hands together in her lap. "No. I was too—busy."

It was then that she looked very tired. Even the yellow lamp failed to bring a glow into her face. Hawthorne sat by the table looking at her, his chin on his hand. He wondered what this strange new Geranium Lady could mean. And he wanted very much to tell her not to bother about anything at all. He also wondered if it could be possible that he might help her, and wished she would let him. He hoped, too, that she would not look like this very long, because it was running a risk.

"Busy?" he said gently. "But you couldn't work in the garden. What kept you so busy?"

She did not look at him.

"There are so many other things to do, you know. Oh, the whole world is full of them! Sometimes I think perhaps it is wrong to have a garden at all."

"That isn't the problem, is it?"

"Only part of it."

"Because I might help solve that."

"I don't see how you could very well."

"It is never wrong to bring beauty into the world," he told her. "Didn't you know that?"

And your garden—why—what if it weren't just red geraniums? If—if to only one person it seemed like something more, if it were a symbol of something he needed, and nearly missed once, a—a kind of red mantle of courage that he hoped to be worthy to wear—then would you think it wrong to have a garden?"

It was now that the defiance came flashing into her face.

"Ah, no!" she breathed. "No, no. I shouldn't. . . . Do you think it could be all that to—anybody?"

"Yes, I think it could. But don't ask me to tell you how, because that's one of my problems."

"I didn't ask, but I thought—perhaps—there might be a special reason."

"If there is, it's locked up where the mysteries live. I haven't the key. Have you?"

He smiled over at her in inquiry; and with a little exclamation she jumped up and turned away, to the fireplace, anywhere, to hide her face from him. It was still pale, but there was a swift and wind-blown joy, that rippled into sheer gaiety.

"Oh well," she laughed at nothing, with her elbows on the mantel-shelf, "maybe it's lost—that key. Never mind. You'll find another, some day!"

He rose, too, and came near her, speaking over her shoulder, gravely.

"If I thought you knew where it was. . . . There's more than you can know— I—I wasn't joking about a—mystery. . . . If you did—June—would you tell me?"

She suddenly faced him, her shoulders against the mantel.

"There's always a mystery on the Island," she laughed, with a quick chill difference. "Captain Madison says so. Oh, Mr. Hawthorne, I trust it isn't an awful one!"

He looked at her blankly.

"Because if it's awful I don't want to hear it tonight. I still dream of dead men on the Beach! And buried gold! And now a lost key! Let's not talk about mysteries. I like gardens better today."

She looked up at him as he stood, rebuffed. . . . But from her distance she was tender, with a sweetness. . . .

"See," she said, softly now, "this was meant to be a homey evening, entirely without problems. I thought you would come tonight. And I remembered that we had never had a fire together. So I laid it myself all ready for you to light."

With a successful laugh and a little shake of the shoulders he said:

"You are perfectly right. You always are. Problems are for rainy weather, and it cleared this morning. . . . It was kind of you to honor me," he added, smiling down at the neatly piled kindling with a large backlog most scientifically placed. "Where are your matches?"

There was soon a brilliant fire in the Betty Latch Cottage, in spite of a confession once made to Jim Brant.

They sat by this fire that was theirs together, and the echo of her name he had used still hung in the room. It never quite vanished during the evening, though they pretended that it was not there. He sought other topics obediently, yet they knew, somehow, that

both were glad he had said what he did about her garden.

She did not once mention her absence of two days, as she had not when she had gone before. If that were part of the problem she did not say so. Neither did she refer to anyone named Warrington, though Miles Hawthorne would have told you it was her nature to be frank. She had a very good opportunity, too, for by and by, after several other topics had been worn out, he mentioned Atherton.

"There's a nice little town at the other end of this island," he remarked, after he had turned the backlog over with the tongs. "You know we once said we'd go there. But I had to ride over today on business. I didn't think it would be pleasant for you."

She shaded her face from the fire.

"I should have sent Brant, but Mr. Baxter needed him. It seemed like a pretty place. I had lunch at the Bayview Inn. Will you go some day with the Admiral and me?"

"Why—perhaps."

He glanced at her in surprise.

"I thought you would like it."

There was the first strained silence they had ever had, and at the end she flashed out:

"Yes, I'll go! I *will*!"

She had never been like this before.

"Rather an odd thing happened while I was at the Inn," he went on presently. "I heard two men talking at the table next mine. It reminded me of what we said once about skill. Even that fails sometimes, doesn't it? They were telling about a poor devil for whom the same man who did so much for me could do nothing. I gathered that he had gone away and left the wretch—dangling in a place you may have heard of—where there's gnashing of teeth. . . . I don't know just why I'm telling you this." Miles Hawthorne took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. But he laughed a little. "It—it rather hit me, all at once."

"Why not tell me?"

"It is very easy to. You see, the man, the one who is—who is blind—has got on my

nerves all day. Good Lord! I hope somebody was kind to him!"

"I'm sure somebody was."

"Just to hear you say it in that voice," he told her, "makes me believe it."

After a long silence, in which June Carver had started three times to speak, and three times closed her lips again, he went on, leaning forward with his hands folded between his knees.

"I hope you won't think it cowardly of me to say this."

"I don't think I shall!"

"This is what I've been thinking all day, ever since I heard about the man in Atherton. What if I had never seen you?"

She closed her eyes.

"Allah is good they say in the East. I think it is true. Whenever you turn your face to me I think that! But, do you know, if I never had seen you, I have the strangest idea that I shouldn't have entirely missed your beauty. I feel as if I had known the ghost of it before, somewhere, the very soul and heart

of it that one can't see anyway. I don't understand that, unless perhaps such supreme things are universal and eternal, and one gets a fragment now and then in the few beautiful moments that come—I trust to everyone!”

She looked across at him finally.

“You made one come to me now, by saying that!”

“I'm glad!”

“Mr. Hawthorne,”—her dark eyes became appealing—“I want to ask you something. And it's going to sound like a silly little question, to you. But it is one that would trouble a woman.”

“Do you think men don't have that kind, too?” he asked.

“Would you ever think badly of me,—very badly, just because I put things off?”

“Think badly of you!” He started to his feet as she said that, and plunged past her, stumbling over the rug. But he stopped just behind her, and put his hand out over her hair without touching it.

“Think badly of you! My God! . . .”

He went to the window and, flinging back the peacock curtains, swung open the casement. The crisp air rushed in off the invisible scarlet garden. He breathed it deeply, and leaned for a second toward the silent sustaining presence there in the dark. . . .

And this time it was he who made the quick change of subject. He still stood at the window with his back to the room, while the cool fragrance came stealing in. He talked about anything—it did not matter what—to the girl in the chair behind him.

“The storm has removed all traces of the channel I helped make in the Beach. The Pond is very high. They’ll have to make a new cut soon. But Jim and I shall be ready by that time, though I don’t suppose there will be so many herring now as went through then.”

“It must be rather nice,” June took up the gauntlet, “to make a dream come true for someone.”

“Oh, he would have pulled it off finally. He had seventeen dollars. . . .”

And so they talked on, they did not really know about what.

He found it was late and said that he must go. The Geranium Lady's restrained tenderness came now like notes on a muted violin. She appeared passionately to desire to do something for him.

As he stood before her, saying good-night, she caught up a book from her table. Running rapidly through it to see that nothing was left in the leaves, she thrust it out at him.

"Take this. Please get William to read it when—when you run out of tobacco next time."

He thanked her and went away. And on the Deep Bottom road he remembered that she had told him nothing at all!

CHAPTER XII

THE MESSAGE OF A SONG

MILES HAWTHORNE did not wait until he was out of tobacco to begin the book the Geranium Lady had lent him. In the first place he intended that such a calamity should never befall him again. Second, it was foolish to save one's pie too long,—just long enough to make each morsel delectable was the proper course to take. So the next afternoon he and Blake began reading on the veranda of Long Point Farm. A fragrant breeze fluttered the old vines, but it was no fresher or sweeter than the breeze that blew through the little book.

Hawthorne walked up and down and laughed, and sat down and listened solemnly, and started up again to tramp the veranda in excited joy over the book that was just a story book and nothing else. Of course June Carver knew he

would like the big, gay, young man named "Beauling" who roared ballads, and went after pearl oysters, and to Benares, and sat in the moonlight before the Taj Mahal, and loved somebody very much. She had just plainly wanted to give him pleasure, and she had known what to do. The only drawback to his enjoyment was the fact that she ought to be reading the book herself, not Blake. But every time he decided to stop and ask her to finish it he simply had to know what happened next, and the secretary was allowed to read one more chapter.

But Blake read exceedingly well. This colorless young man, just out of a secretarial course in college, had qualities that rendered him not so bad a companion as one might have expected. A friendly intimacy had been established between the two men of totally different caliber. And Hawthorne had learned things about Blake's life—about his stupid mother, so it would seem, his worthless father, and the girl to whom he was engaged, things all of the same dull tone not to be called a

spere we've read, she'd—she'd think I was crazy!"

Miles Hawthorne laughed a little, and said nothing. He thought it best not to encourage Blake in this direction, since Rose was such a good girl and no doubt very fond of him. He knew that there is genius in loving as well as in the possession of that fire called divine, and that it is not to be found in every affectionate little soul who is willing to marry a man. This, to his mind, did not necessarily contradict the Geranium Lady's theory that "there are certain exquisite things a woman is born wanting to do."

"As you implied yourself, Blake," he remarked, "words aren't all. Sometimes I've an idea that silence means a deal more."

The man from the *Alaska* did not give much thought to Blake's trouble, though possibly he might have done so if he had seen all of his actions that day. But, not being there, he could not know that the secretary, driving home from Bridgewater, had suddenly turned the Admiral down a bushy lane in order to

avoid meeting June Carver, and had sat in his leafy seclusion, to the astonishment of a pair of tame chewinks, holding a very hot face between his hands.

They did not finish the book that afternoon, for Hawthorne would not allow Blake to read in the dusk. They sat watching one of Jim Brant's scarlet sunsets until Bone called them to supper, which was always late at Long Point Farm, because Hawthorne did not believe in wasting daylight.

After supper Blake was unexpectedly obliged to go for more milk. Hawthorne awaited his return in the living-room. No fire burned on the hearth, by his command, and so there was no reason for sitting by it. Besides, a small mahogany rocker now stood on the leopard rug, where it had last been occupied. It was perhaps just as well not to sit opposite that. Hawthorne walked up and down.

The windows were blocking out the last of the twilight when Bone shuffled in with the lamp.

"I sha'n't want that tonight, Bone, not till William gets back," he told the negro.

"Doan't want no light?" queried the old man, astonished. His black face was oddly agitated. He peered at the tall man anxiously. William Blake had dashed off with the excuse about milk as a result of something Bone had communicated, something that the winds must have borne on wings to Long Point Farm.

"Doan't want no light? Pshaw now, Mista' Hawthorne, dere ain't no good nebber comes o' folkses settin' in de dark!"

"Perhaps not, Bone, but I don't care for the lamp, thank you."

"Yas, sah," replied the negro, but he did not go away. He shuffled closer with his halting step, and held the lamp high.

"Do anythin' ail y'all, sah? Yo' ain't sick er nothin'?"

"No."

"Ah 'clare to goodness, whar's dat ole pipe?" expostulated Bone, beginning to look around the room. "A gennelman wants his pipe in de evenin'. Jes' y'all wait a minute. Ah'll find it fo' yo'!"

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"It's right here in my pocket, Bone. A gentleman can't smoke all the time."

But the old man's expression became more perturbed. It seemed as if he could not go away.

"Won't yo' let ole Bone light it, honey,—sah?" he quavered.

And to please him Hawthorne handed him the pipe. After it was safely lighted Bone shuffled off, taking the lamp with him.

There was no fire on the hearth, and the mahogany rocker stood there, the one that just demanded a woman to sit and sew in the sun, but by and by Hawthorne went and sat opposite it, long before Blake's return.

The secretary found him there. He brought a lamp, having been waylaid by Bone. He came in a little out of breath, as if he had been walking rapidly, and his face, usually literally colorless, was white and red. Putting the lamp on the table, he cleared his throat nervously.

"Did you get the milk?" inquired Lieutenant Hawthorne, holding a book up between his face and the bright lamp.

"Y—yes," stammered Blake.

"It was a long walk. You should have taken the Admiral. I didn't think."

"That's all right."

"When you've got your breath I wish you would finish this, please."

He indicated the little book that he held.

"Yes, sir. I'll read it now."

"Wait a minute."

Hawthorne opened the book, while Blake adjusted the lamp and brought a chair.

"I found a sheet of paper in here. Did you leave it to mark the place?"

He relinquished the book and the paper.

"No, sir," said the secretary.

"Does it look important?" Hawthorne smiled grimly as he asked the question.

"No, sir," repeated Blake, "I shouldn't say that it was important. I'll read it. At the top it says: 'Night Song at Amalfi.'"¹ Blake's voice was low, and oddly emotional for a colorless young man. Standing by the table, he read from the thin sheet of paper, while

¹ Sara Teasdale, *Harper's*, April, 1914.

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Hawthorne listened, shading his eyes with his hand.

“‘I asked the scattered stars
What I should give my love;’”

One could tell it was meant to be sung under
a starry night sky by the way Blake read it. . . .

“‘They answered me with silence,
Silence above.

“‘I asked the darkened sea
Where the fishers go;
It answered me with silence,
Silence below.

“‘Oh, I could give him weeping
Or I could give him song;
But how can I give him silence
My whole life long?’” . . .

Hawthorne stood before the secretary, grasping at the paper.

“I think it was copied out of a magazine,”
Blake was saying.

“Give it to me!”

Hawthorne crushed the small sheet of notepaper in his hand.

"Understand this. She looked through the book to see that nothing was left in it. I remember now. We had no right to see it, no right at all. It was my fault. We must forget it—every word!"

He turned his back on the secretary all at once, and stood looking at the dark hearth.

"We'll finish the book another time," he added. "Good-night, Blake."

"Good-night," said William Blake, and tiptoed out of the room.

Somewhat later Miles Hawthorne raised his head from the mantel where he had suddenly leaned it. He threw a bit of paper on to the ashes in the fireplace, having first held it to a lighted match. It had flamed up bravely. . . .

He was sure that she had forgotten that it was in the little book; and it was of no use to him.

CHAPTER XIII

CAPTAIN MADISON ON MARRIAGE

JOTH TORREY and Young Seavey, as he was named to distinguish him from Old Seavey, the Captain's father—all three were Henry—found Lieutenant Hawthorne at home the next day when they made an afternoon call. It was a much-meditated expedition, suddenly decided upon. The two were of the best type of fine young Islanders. Tall, muscular, with clear open faces and sea-blue eyes, they were handsome youths, with the simple good manners of their fathers. Joth Torrey was a deep-sea fisherman, and Seavey, after having been to Harvard, returned to the Island by preference to design and build with his own strong hands, houses, barns, and boats. There were very few new structures needed on the Island, so he had plenty of leisure, which he employed in

a remote retreat in the woods where he was supposed to be inventing a new kind of boat, which as yet had refused to go. Hawthorne welcomed the two young men gladly. He had met them about the Island, but they had never before come to the Farm in his tenancy.

As they sat on the veranda—the off-islander did not have the country habit of sitting indoors—the two callers regarded Miles Hawthorne with shy interest. They had inspected the “traps” that had so awakened Jim Brant and thrilled the Geranium Lady. But they loved the Island and desired only to live and die upon it. This man seemed to them all the more a being apart because he had gone to the earth’s ends, and returned. And this was their attitude toward his readiness swiftly to go to life’s end, and his return from that brink. But Hawthorne, for his part, looked at them with a touch of wonder. They were so gallantly and supremely young; and both were reported to be following the Island custom of choosing in the first glow of life a partner. Each was courting a tall Island girl with fearless eyes

and sweet lips. Hawthorne had once been introduced to both girls. And his heart had leapt at the shy pride, and something else, in the young voices.

Conversation, this afternoon, threatened to have a painful death. The young men seemed preoccupied, and their host found difficulty in whipping up enthusiasm on any topic. They discussed boats for a time, but Joth Torrey apparently thought it indelicate to refer to battleships, and so was pathetically embarrassed when he found himself plunging headlong upon the Scylla of the navy and the still worse Charybdis of guns. Then he was so affected by Hawthorne's puzzled surprise at his confusion that he sat in absolute silence. Young Seavey asked Hawthorne if he would go to a clam bake. Each man had to bring a girl, he said. When he in his turn became scarlet the off-islander decided that he was a poor host, and being really very glad to see these heaven-blessed youths, turned his energies to their entertainment. And he never failed when he did that. Joth Torrey soon felt that

he was rather outdoing himself in this matter of calling on heroes who got into the newspapers. And Young Seavey tried to remember if it were at Harvard that he had learned that when you drop your company manners all things become easy and delightful.

So when Captain Madison drove into the yard he found two exhilarated youths, and one man, who somehow looked older today, quietly smoking and listening to their loosened tongues.

The skipper, perfectly at home at the Farm, lighted his pipe and surveyed the group from the old armchair into which he had dropped. His eyes were gleaming in a way they had when he felt expansive.

"Met Lemuel Leeks up the road a spell," he said. "I perceived he were lookin' kinder forlorn today. Cal'late he's had to strike another name off his list."

Torrey and Seavey looked disgusted.

"Lemuel Leeks?" asked Hawthorne. "I believe he's new to me."

"Wal', now! 'Ain't I ever told ye 'bout

him?" ejaculated the Captain. "What could I hev be'n thinkin' of?"

"Lemuel Leeks," said Young Seavey, "is a darn fool, and a mighty impudent one!"

"That's because Henry don't like one o' them names bein' on Lemuel's list," explained the old man.

"Come," smiled Hawthorne, "tell me about Lemuel, Captain. That's what you want to do, now isn't it?"

"Lives over on the Back Road, Lemuel does," smoked the skipper. "Lives all alone in a purty nice house. Many a gal 'u'd be glad to hev as nice a one. But 'tain't Lemuel's fault he lives alone. He *wants* to git married. An' I cal'late he's set 'bout it in the most scientific way o' any man on the Island, or off. All the trouble is, as fer as I kin make out, he's too scientific. In them matters a little haphazard-in' an' side-steppin' like is more ap' to be successful."

Captain Madison eyed Joth and Young Seavey, who turned red at his gaze.

"The way Lemuel set about this here marry-

in' business," he continued, "were to make a list o' all the gals on the Island that he'd be willin' to take. An' as he b'lieved in hitchin' up with the moon an' stars—er some sech poetic expression Mindy uses—he headed his list with the likeliest gals. It were his plan to ask 'em all in order right down the list. An' if it gave out before he got one, then he'd go off Island—not before.

"Poor Lemuel! I cal'late he's had some hard knocks. Ye can't get none o' the gals to say a word 'bout what passes in them interviews, but they all goes off into highsterics whenever ye mention Lemuel."

"But they tell about the 'qualifications,'" put in Joth Torrey. "That is, they tell some of them. I can't get Charity Lee to tell me all."

"I were just passin' on to that," said the Captain. "It's leaked out somehow 'rother that Lemuel presents the gals with a formidable docyment, which the one he's willin' to make the future Mrs. Leeks has gotter agree to. Only the gals know the hull on't, an' they won't

tell the men folks. Biggest hint I ever got were from Mindwell Bartlett. A niece o' hers told her. But all she'd say to me 'bout it were that all men was odjous creeters!"

"I believe it begins," said Young Seavey, "with the provision that Mrs. Leeks may buy meat once a week, can't ever have company overnight, and can only go to one sociable a month."

"And she's got to play the organ for Lemuel to sing," said Joth Torrey. "He stopped Charity Lee in the middle of the road one awful hot day and asked her if she could play 'As Pants the Wearied Hart.'"

"Gardenia's name headed the list," remarked Seavey. "It was mighty hard for her, being the first one. She didn't know just how to take it. He scared her almost to death saying she'd have to be married in black, because he'd been warned in a dream that he'd die young, and then she'd have her mourning ready!"

"This here marryin' proposition," continued the skipper, after a pause, passing from the particular case of Lemuel Leeks to the general,

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"be it scientific or otherwise, is a turrible agitatin' thing."

Lieutenant Hawthorne turned and looked at him, but the skipper was innocent.

"From both sides o' the fence it's agitatin'." He reflected gravely. "Some men works their wives to death, some bores them to death, others kills 'em with kindness. An' when ye see the couples that hitch up it makes ye wonder if God A'mighty Himself don't laugh. It's a cur'ous thing. Hev ye perceived how Natur' takes care o' the matin' o' birds an' beasts an' sech, an' there ain't no mistakes made to speak of, but when ye leave Natur' an' instinct an' resort to s'posably higher things, like brains and reasonin', then ye git a turrible mess? Ye would think now, wouldn't ye, that in sech an important affair as the matin' o' humankind the A'mighty would arrange to hev no mistakes? Wal', I say He did! An' it's when ye git away from His intentions, which is Natur', that the mistakes begin."

"I have no doubt you are right," said Haw-

thorne, for it seemed necessary to make some comment to cover the silence.

"There ain't no kind o' use in mistakes," Captain Madison went on, warming to his more serious vein. "In the first place there's so many good women in the world! An' a good woman is more'n half of a successful marriage. She's two-thirds. If I was to marry again I'd hev a dreadful time choosin' among so many. The first time it ain't so much ch'ice as 'tis a—wal' a sorter clear call, a-thrillin' to hear!"

Neither of the three younger men spoke, having nothing to add, apparently, to the Captain's exposition. The wind freshening from the south bore the low thunder of June Carver's shouting waters. Each might have been listening for a clear call, thrilling to hear. . . .

With his blue eyes on the horizon the old sailor nodded his head. Hawthorne knew him in these expansive moods. He had still something to say.

"A good woman, considerin' her hull life through, is summat like a shipshape flower garden. Somethin' sweet fer every season.

In the spring there's crocuses, an' tulips, an' vi'lets, an' daffodillies. Then comes summer with all them rich an' spicey things—cinnamon pinks, an' heliotrope, an' roses. An' in the purtiest corner there'll be a mite o' baby's-breath. . . . In fall some gardens hev salvia,—others asters. They don't go well together. Asters is milder like the gentle ones. Salvia is like the snappy ones that has their last fling. I'm not referrin', ye perceive, to the weeds an' prickly things as orter be dug up an' thrown away. Nor to the purty wild things in the woods where nobody sees. I'm jest talkin' 'bout what grows in gardens. An' it's a cur'ous rule o' the A'mighty, but I cal'late a wise un, that a man can't pick a bouquet of all them beauteous things *at once*. If he could—I cal'late it would be too much fer him!"

No word in all this about red geraniums, thought Miles Hawthorne.

Captain Madison's eyes turned solemn. He had been married to a good woman, once, whose blossoming from spring to autumn had been all for him. Joth Torrey and Young Sea-

vey stared at their shoes. Similes were somewhat confusing to them. Hawthorne lighted another cigarette rather hastily. The Captain's words were somehow unsteady. But the old man had not quite finished. It must have been something besides the meeting with poor Lemuel Leeks that made him so oddly reflective this afternoon.

"Love," he said abruptly, staring seaward, "is the fearsomest an' the fairest thing the Lord A'mighty's made in all these years o' His Creation. Sometimes ye think ye don't git along very well with it,—but ye can't git along at all without it! It's the one thing whose presence er absence makes sech a pile o' difference to sech a sight o' folks. I tell ye, young men, there's a kind o' sharpness an' a sweetness in it, all mixed up to form a sorter devilish combination—that—that beats all! Take my advice, an' whatever ye do, don't miss it. Ye better hev the fearsomeness, than miss the fairness!"

Then without another word the Captain stumped out to the buggy, shook the reins over Sally's back, and drove away.

If Joth Torrey and Young Seavey had been uncomfortable before, now they were in a hot confusion that gave the lie to all previously acquired poise. They struggled to their feet with a feeling that the afternoon had been a mad career among perilous rifts; for they, too, had heard the tale that had made William Blake go so unexpectedly after milk.

CHAPTER XIV

NOT MILES HAWTHORNE

At first no one in Bridgewater had dared tell Captain Madison the gossip about the girl from off-island whom he had named the Geranium Lady. His affectionate interest in her was looked upon with amusement by the women, although until now every one who knew her liked her. However, lately, Miss Boles and some of her friends had begun to say that it did seem queer for a young lady to live alone in Bijah's Cove with only a mad woman named Hannah, who wore dreadful polka dots, was known to wait on her hand and foot, and to refuse to sit at the table with her. The men would have been glad to share Captain Madison's intimacy. However, all agreed that it was a ticklish job to relate to the old skipper the story of the Geranium Lady's trips to Ather-

ton, and the apparent fact that there was somebody else in her high favor besides Lieutenant Hawthorne, the off-islander of all others whom they had made one of themselves. But Mrs. Bartlett finally told him.

It was on the following morning that Sally was driven, rather more rapidly than comfortably, to Long Point Farm, and Miles Hawthorne received an invitation to go up Shamawna way fishing. He was very glad indeed to go, for the little book, at length finished by William Blake, had one of those happy endings that are so common. There was a flurry of preparation, the secretary appearing unusually enthusiastic, though he was not invited himself; and the old buggy got under way loaded with fishing-tackle and rubber boots. It would be an all-day trip, according to Captain Madison. They would not be back until after dark.

A long drive was before them, the familiar way lying through Deep Bottom and Bijah's Cove, past the Betty Latch Cottage. However, at the outset Captain Madison made a detour. At the edge of the hollow where the Cove lay

and before it the scarlet garden burning in the sun, he turned off on to a back road. To Hawthorne's surprised question he muttered something about a message from Mrs. Bartlett to the Widow Willis, and gave Sally a shock by touching her with a whip. The skipper looked over his shoulder furtively; but Hawthorne did not so much as glance in the direction of the Cove.

The real reason for Captain Madison's sudden interest in fishing, and also for his unprecedented avoidance of the beaten track, was that Bijah's Cove had an unwonted visitor today. At nine o'clock the skipper had received a telephone call from Mrs. Bartlett, who only the evening before had revealed to him the mystery that had excited all Bridgewater. She had said a man with a brown beard and a "build" that to some might suggest Mr. Weatherwax—though for her part she considered him slimmer—had just driven up to the store and inquired the way to Bijah's Cove. Upon being given directions he had asked how he might recognize the Betty Latch Cottage. He had stared at Mrs. Bartlett in

astonishment when told about the scarlet garden, surely the most striking landmark, and murmured under his breath, "Good Heavens! What next?" Then he had driven off quickly, raising his hat to Mrs. Bartlett,—though she would say she was more used to that now than before Captain Hawthorne came. But what was to be done? How could they shield this man whom they had come to love?

It was then that Captain Madison decided to go fishing. He had started immediately for Long Point; and sure enough, there was a livery horse hitched in the oak grove of the Betty Latch Cottage. The skipper had done a great deal of thinking on his way to the Farm. He wished that he were provided with verses to interpret such weather signs as now confronted him. He had told the Geranium Lady that all signs sometimes fail. That was true! And even then he did not know what to make of the situation. He, like the other villagers, grew hot at the thought that Miles Hawthorne might be going to find sorrow instead of comfort on their Island.

As they drove behind Sally on the unfrequented back road the old sailor stole a glance now and then at his companion. He was wishing—although the younger man seemed bent on making jokes today—that he had not tried quite so hard to make him happy.

The other side of Bridgewater, on the road to Shamawna Bight, a man walking in the dust looked up as the buggy creaked past. He removed his hat somewhat before Hawthorne's tardy greeting. Already Jim Brant had heard of the visitor at Bijah's Cove and of Captain Madison's fishing trip.

"Are we prepared for the great event, Jim?" Hawthorne called out to his partner. The Beach was soon to be opened again.

"Yes, sir," answered Brant. "They cal'late ter git at it tomorrer. . . ."

That night, long before the buggy had returned, the moon in her second quarter hung over the Cove, with a star to bear her peaceful company. No breath of wind stirred the surface of the water to trouble the beauty mirrored there; and the dark trees stood out in

chiseled immobility. Silence slept in the gentle hollow, except for the call of a whippoorwill who complained grievously in the grove, his note sounding now among the trees that sheltered the Betty Latch Cottage and now in the thicket across the road. But at the opening of the door of the cottage, and a movement among the bushes opposite, he flew away in a fright. A few minutes later his call came back in dying sweetness from some hushed glade across the meadow.

The Geranium Lady came out into her garden that looked black instead of scarlet in the blue moonlight. With her was the visitor who had asked the way of Mrs. Bartlett, the man Jim Brant had seen in Atherton. They stood together in the midst of the garden.

June Carver talked this time, looking into the man's face as if she would make him understand something. And when after a long time there was no change in those granite outlines, her hands went out in a fluttering gesture over the dark velvet of her flowers.

The man drew her to him and kissed her cheek.

"Good - night, June," he said briefly. "I will see you tomorrow."

When he was gone the Geranium Lady went into the house and shut the door.

After a long still space the whippoorwill returned to the grove. He called, called, called in the silent night. And Jim Brant, moving out of the thicket with Indian stealth, this time did not frighten him.

It was no half-breed who strode off across the hollow, leaving the Betty Latch Cottage to smile in the tranquillity. As he had lately been "all white," Jim Brant was all Indian tonight. But it had been a white man who had kissed her—and that man was not Miles Hawthorne! . . .

The moon had set and a black curtain had fallen over Bijah's Cove before the flop, flop of Sally's feet heralded the return of Captain Madison and Lieutenant Hawthorne. They did not take the back road this time, but drove by the Geranium Lady's cottage. A light still

burned there, in the little dormer windows of the roof. Sally fell into a walk on the sandy road; and as they passed the door the fragrance from the hidden garden floated out to them, in gracious greeting. Marvelously enough it was not "just red geraniums" there under the velvet mantle, which was now black. And the sweetness might have been the Geranium Lady's own smile. As the scented breath reached him Hawthorne took off his hat under cover of the darkness, in recognition of the challenge of the garden. And he looked up just once at the squares of faint golden light. . . .

The next day the Beach was opened again. The last man to work on it was Jim Brant.

CHAPTER XV

THE BEAUTIFUL LADY WITHOUT MERCY

IN the late afternoon June Carver walked on the downs. The sun slanted over undulations of meadow where the clover was beginning to show. The sky, majestic with a fleet of full-sailed cloud galleons, hinted in its mysterious blue height of unthinkable spaces. Under it the girl felt pitifully small. The time had not yet come to her, as it does to a few, when she was glad to feel so, to lose identity and therefore sorrow—if there were sorrow—in the vastness of unconscious Nature. The impersonality of this wide glory oppressed instead of comforting her.

She was going nowhere, although she did think she would like to find a landmark Captain Madison had spoken of once. It was only a coincidence that this lay in the direction of

Long Point Farm. But she did not think very much about the landmark as she wandered on alone. She thought of all manner of strange matters. Why did the world make her shrink today? There were, after all, intimate as well as infinite things. She stooped to breathe the beauty of a wild rose, in gratitude to its neighborliness.

And then, as she sat there by the faint wagon track in the shadow of some bayberry bushes, well-being, still, deep, sweet, brimmed up in her heart. It was larger and calmer than mere joy. It was the primal essential comfort. Her soul and body rested in it, fearlessly. For Miles Hawthorne, riding the Admiral, had come out of the woods. He was advancing toward her with soft thudding on the grass, the low sun-shafts on his bared head and full in his face.

But as he approached, humming a tune to the time of the Admiral's hoof-beats, into the well-being dropped a spreading pain, poison in the wine cup. He came on, at once too slowly and too fast. Should she let him pass her?

If she sat quite still he would not know she was there. It would perhaps be better to let him pass. . . .

Half across the open space between the wood and the bayberry bushes, he put the Admiral into a gentle canter and the humming turned to a stirring bass song, the words of which came on to her quite plainly:

““And now thy face grows dim apace,
And seems of yon white foam a part.
Canst hear me through the water bass
Cry: “To the shore, Sweetheart?”””

He laughed and touched the horse's neck.

“Very appropriate, hey old Admiral?” he said aloud.

She rose by the bayberry bushes and put her hand out hesitatingly toward the Admiral's bridle rein, looking up at his rider without speaking. The horse shied away from her, and Hawthorne, holding his hand as a shade from the glaring sun, reined him back until he saw a blur of scarlet at her belt.

“Is it really—you?” he asked her.

"Yes, it is," replied the Geranium Lady, in a small, soft voice.

He dismounted.

"I must apologize for splitting the air with my attempts at music. Everybody laughs when I sing."

"They've no business to!" said June.

They stood looking at each other, for it seemed a long time since he had lighted the fire in the Betty Latch Cottage. It was not exactly the same Geranium Lady who had laughed—and cried?—that night. It was only the subdued, tired part of her. And perhaps it was really not the same man. He had never seemed so calm and strong, so envelopingly kind.

He looked down at her scarlet flowers.

"Were you going for a walk?" he asked quietly.

"Yes; it is such a wonder of a day."

"Isn't it? That's why I am riding. May the Admiral and I come too?"

"Of course."

With the bridle rein slung over his arm he walked beside her. All the joy welled up again

in the cup of her heart. They went together over the wide fields, and there was no longer any terror in the far-flung sweep of things, only beauty.

"Did you have any special goal to reach?" he inquired presently.

"I thought I might find the site of the Indian woman's cottage Captain Madison spoke of once," she told him.

"I know. I haven't chanced to see it, but it is over here somewhere. We'll try to find it today."

Mere words. And yet?

Through the wood and out again on the other side, they were silent, but companionably so. And it came to June that this was indeed a different man, yet endearingly familiar. It would take no small thing now, she knew, to stir him from this rock-bound gentleness that mastered her even more completely than that which she had glimpsed before.

In the descent of a slope she caught her foot in a bramble and nearly fell. As he aided her he exclaimed:

"You're still tired!"

"A little."

"I thought so. And here's the Admiral doing nothing to earn his oats. You must let me help you up. I think you will be quite comfortable."

He put her on to the tall horse and walked by her side. "Now," he remarked, smiling up humorously, "I shall have to call you 'The Beautiful Lady Without Mercy'!"

In their search they came to a circular clearing surrounded on all sides by a thicket through which a dark green lane threaded its way. And Miles Hawthorne talked to her quietly, as if their intercourse had always been about landmarks!

"This," he explained, "is Cæsar's Field. Have you ever seen it before?"

She shook her head.

"Why Cæsar?"

"An old negro slave of that name found his way here during the Civil War,—a runaway, I suppose. He felled all of these trees and made himself a cabin. He lived here alone, Captain

Madison says, and when he died he asked to be buried within sight of the sea he had lived within the sound of for so long. You will see his grave on beyond a bit, past the next woods."

"Why,—can you hear the ocean in so secluded a spot?"

"Oh, yes. Listen."

A faint long rumble answered their silence.

Entering the lane that had led from Cæsar's Field, they passed a flock of sheep peacefully feeding in the green light, and came out upon a rise of ground. Hawthorne pointed across a hollow to another slight elevation.

"Over there is his grave, I think. Do you see a headstone?"

"Yes. And 'way beyond is the sea. He had his wish. . . ."

At last they came upon the site of the old squaw's cottage. It was nearly sunset. They had retraced their way, circling twice, the Admiral walking sedately, Hawthorne by his side. June found it,—a crumbling cellar beside an apple orchard, almost hidden by tall grass.

In what had been its dooryard there was the poor ghost of a garden. Almost choked by grass and weeds a monthly rose had put forth a solitary bloom. Phlox was mixed here and there with wild Star of Bethlehem. And a pink rambler, robbed of its former support, had taken to an apple tree, where it was blossoming sturdily. The ruins of the cottage were pinkish gray in the waning light.

"Her father was the last man of the Deep Bottom tribe of Indians," said Hawthorne, cutting the rose with his knife and giving it to June. "This is where his wigwam stood."

"What a lonely, beautiful place," said the girl, looking about the little hollow, while the Admiral cropped grass.

"It is even more isolated than my own."

"Yours?"

"Yes. I couldn't let anyone else have Long Point—now. . . . This is on the edge of Deep Bottom," he added, changing the subject abruptly. "I wonder where Shamawna's wigwam stood."

"Who was she?"

"There's a story about her I may be able to tell you some day. I can't now, because it was told me in confidence. . . . All off-islanders have not been as safe with Shamawna's people as we are!"

They stood in silence, knowing it was time to go back, each unwilling to say so. The Admiral took a step occasionally as he cropped. His eating was the only sound.

So Miles Hawthorne was going to buy Long Point Farm. He would probably come to it often. And she owned the Betty Latch Cottage. Would she ever be here again? June did not know that she caught her breath until he glanced up quickly.

"We have come too far," he said after a moment.

"Oh, no!"

With one impulse they turned and looked at the sunset. The gently rolling upland met the sky and from behind its dark edge flared streamers of rose.

"How would you like to see one," Hawthorne asked her gently, "blood red, over

back of a volcano, with a spiral of black smoke streaked up through the middle of the sky, and some orange sails on the water down in front?"

"I'd—like it!"

"So should I."

"Have you—have you seen that kind?"

"Two or three, once upon a time. But one in particular."

She looked at him quickly, and then away; but Hawthorne only smiled. "One most especially particular!" he said.

The Admiral took another step, and she reached over for a spray of the pink rambler that grew on the apple tree. Leaning sidewise farther than she knew, she lost her balance as the horse moved again, and would have fallen to the ground if Hawthorne had not caught her.

For a moment she lay perfectly still, held in his arms that gathered her close and strong. Her face was hidden on his shoulder. So she was unaware that he did not even look at her, but most gratefully straight up at the pink

rambler that swayed in the breeze as if it had nothing whatever to do with the situation. In another instant he had set her on her feet, and her face was hidden in the Admiral's mane now. They were both pale.

"Let me help you up again," he said rather huskily.

"Thank you."

Only these frail syllables passing between them!

They proceeded westward, for the Geranium Lady said she must hurry home. The sun finally sank in violet clouds, presaging an evening that would be overcast. As they ascended an uneven slope that was in the shadow of a thick grove Hawthorne took the bridle rein—June guessed not to give the Admiral guidance. They went on so, and finally her hand gently stole out, and rested on his shoulder.

At the end of a silent, shadowy lane leading from Deep Bottom they stopped at the bars. June slipped down from the horse.

"Please don't come any farther—tonight,"

she said, impelled almost to a whisper by the brooding stillness.

"Not unless you wish it."

He let down the bars for her, and she stood on the other side, feeling very far away, while he replaced them. His quiet calm steadied her. It might have been any good-night they were going to say.

The soft voices of the evening rose about them, all at once seeming loud. The Admiral stamped and ate his bit.

When the last bar was in place Miles Hawthorne took the bridle.

"Say good-bye to her, boy." He spoke lightly. "Tell her you've appreciated your great privileges. He means more than you would think to look at him," he explained. "We have to thank you for taking us along this afternoon."

Then his manner changed. And in the midst of her weary perplexities she was sustained. For the second time in their lives he called her by her name, but his steady voice meant, she felt, only perfect companionship—an exquisite

comforting. Though she knew he did not see her face in the dusk he smiled over at her across the bars.

“Good-night, June,” he said. And the words were those already used by somebody else! “I will see you tomorrow.”

CHAPTER XVI

SHAMAWNA'S WAY

EVENING fell warm and dark. The moon went in and out of cloud-banks, giving only a capricious light. The sweet full smell of rain was in the air. It was so calm a night that even the surf on the far-off Beach had sunk to silence.

Jim Brant was plunging through the Deep Bottom lanes toward Bijah's Cove. His dark form swung in noiseless, springing strides. His nostrils sniffed at the heady odor of the coming rain.

He had walked straight up from the Beach, after the work of cutting the new channel was completed, stopping only for a word with William Blake at the gate of Long Point Farm. There he had seen Hawthorne in the doorway a moment. The pulses in his head beat with

the pride of the thought that he could have gone in and talked with him, he, Jim Brant, if he had so chosen! But instinct had kept him away—tonight. When Hawthorne in the doorway had called, "Is anyone there, Blake?" he had melted into the darkness.

Other thoughts came, and his head and heart kept on throbbing as he strode along. To him the night seemed tropical—the shirt at his throat was torn open. Sweat ran from his body. The blood that coursed through his veins scorched and kindled. It might have been the news of the past fortnight; it might have been the glimpse of Hawthorne at the door; it might have been only the rich, full smell in the air, but that leaping blood was again all Indian. "No white man can know what it's like," he had told Hawthorne. "It's heaven and hell."

He came to the bars where Hawthorne and June had parted not long ago; and with a touch on the top leaped over them. At the brow of the low hill before the descent into the hollow bearing the name of the water that crept

into it, he paused. The windows of the Betty Latch Cottage were lighted cozily—but Long Point Farm had looked lonely tonight. With an oath he lurched down the sandy road. . . .

Again the thicket opposite the scarlet garden of the little house was inhabited. Again the whippoorwill flew away in agitation. But very soon the bushes ceased to move, and the night was calm, brooding, perfectly still. The moon began to creep in and out like a pale watcher. Far off the clock on the village church struck nine. The thin notes floated lonesomely one by one over the hollow.

The lamp-lit room of the Betty Latch Cottage must have become too warm, for with the striking of the clock the light was put out and again the girl and the man she had met in Atherton came into the garden. This time they crossed the road, and by the whippoorwill thicket stopped while the man let down the bars for her. The moon happened to be looking on, so she must have seen the girl's lips set as for the second time that evening someone did her that service. She stepped through into

the meadow in whose arms the Cove slept, and waited for the bars to be put up again. She was all white but for her hair and eyes. The man carried her white sweater.

"This will be refreshing," he said, wiping his hands when he had replaced the bars, "though I hope you don't expect me to do much rowing tonight!" He followed her, talking, as they started on. "Here's a surprise for you; just thought of it. Whom do you suppose I saw in Atherton this morning, going into Mildmay's house? Of course he did not recognize me, and I didn't have time to stop."

But while he was speaking the girl hurried forward. It was almost as if she put her hands to her ears.

At the edge of the Cove they paused for some time, evidently making the dory ready, the little blue one that more than once had wallowed after the fleet *Sitka*. Their figures looked, from the thicket, small and ghostly in the uncertain light. There was a scraping over the pebbles, then the sound of a tin can thrown into the boat, the various noises of launching.

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Fully five minutes passed,—plenty of time to call out from the thicket, to be heard, and answered!

The Geranium Lady stepped into the dory with the white man who had kissed her—who kept her from Hawthorne. And Jim Brant slowly stood up at the edge of the thicket.

For a moment there seemed to come a great pause in things—no breath, nor sound, nor motion. Then into this void the now distant whippoorwill dropped his liquid sorrow, and the leaves seemed stirred by it mournfully. An owl on a branch hooted. And a stray gull, roused from sleep on the waves, suddenly shivered the air by a raucous scream. He carried in that one cry of his all the wild and dreadful mystery of the sea, sent it thrilling along the inlet, then flashed away into the vast, windy spaces of his birth.

The dory glided off over the crispy ripples, in it the white man and the woman who was not worthy of Hawthorne. And Jim Brant deliberately turned his back, without delivering the message intrusted to him. . . .

It was toward midnight in Deep Bottom. The air was still heavy, full, sweet. There had been no rain.

With Indian speed in the darkness a man was running toward Long Point Farm. His breath tore its way in great sobs as he crashed through the woods, leaping, falling, cursing, plunging onward. When he kept in the lanes it was by instinct, for there was no moon now in the cloudy sky. In the open spaces he ran low and arrow-like. He sped through Cæsar's Field, and losing his way on the other side, fell headlong across the lonesome grave, leaping up with an oath of horror. On its elevation he paused an instant, and from the south came a long sullen sound. Gasping, he ran on, that the crash of his footsteps might drown that muttering. Beyond, in the next grove, a flock of sheep slept. He plunged among them, trampled over them, cursing again at their frantic cries that came pitifully to his ears as, stumbling on, he finally trembled at the entrance of the thickest of all the groves. He knew it for the legendary site of Shamawna's wigwam.

Here he fell again, it may have been over a log. The trees stirred at his entrance, rubbing their branches with queer grim sounds of welcome. A night bird flapped upward. In this wood it was that Shamawna had made sure that the off-islander would not go, and had given birth to her son, whose blood leaped through the veins of the man who must pass through, on his way to Long Point Farm. Living thoughts clustered in the darkness. Shamawna's passionate ghost was there, holding out its hands to him. But in his body, too, was a rill of the white man's blood. With blasphemous sobbing he crashed through the ghastly, meaningful place,—where the very trees knew him for the grandchild of Shamawna's son.

For Jim Brant, the half-breed, would never have started for Long Point in the middle of this starless night if he had not wakened to find that he was all Indian no longer, that his other self struggled into an anguished consciousness of what he had done.

He stumbled, gasping and exhausted, into

the yard of the lonely farm house that was both dark and silent in the sweet warm night. Here the hidden surf mumbled monotonously, impersonally, with a hideous indifference. He fell at the foot of the low step. A man who sat alone on the veranda rose with a quick exclamation.

Miles Hawthorne, not in the mood for bed, sat up late on the honeysuckle porch, nursing a dead pipe, and feeling against his shoulder, in the sinews of his arms, in the nerves of his hands, a dear weight. For him, too, the heavy odor of the rain clouds had its intoxication. But he had sat very quietly after sending Blake to bed.

The half-falling invisible steps had stopped at his very feet. After the first exclamation there was silence, except for the thick breath of someone far spent. Hawthorne bent in the darkness and felt for the prone figure.

"Jim! Jim Brant!"

Then in the blackness, impenetrable to the man who had touched and recognized the rough gigantic form, there passed quick short agonized

sentences. The world must have reeled—
though how should a man know?

“For God’s sake what is it?”

“They’ve—gone— *She’s* gone!”

“Gone! They! Who?”

“I never—would—ha’—done it—”

“You!”

“If. . . I seen him—kiss her!”

“What do you mean? Tell me—quietly.”

“I seen him—kiss her! All the town knows
—but you!”

“Be careful—Brant—what you say!”

“She went to—Atherton—first. I seen her
—with him. . . She went again. . .”

“Atherton!”

“He came ter the Cove. Yesterday! To-
night!”

“Not—*tonight!* My God, that’s a lie!”

“Tonight. . . He dared come—he let me
see him—love her. Only—you—can do—
that!”

Hawthorne caught at the man’s arm, and the
hoarse voice stopped, choking.

“That’s enough! . . . Wait! Let me think.

. . . You said you had done—something! You said—*they*—had—gone! *Can't you speak?*”

“You can kill me! You—will—kill me! . . .”

“Where are you? . . . For God's sake! . . .”

“The Beach—”

“Go—on!”

“We made the cut wide—twelve feet. They told me ter warn folks. The—current! It's strong! . . . She started at nine—in the dory—with—*him*. At nine. I didn't—tell! They—'ain't—come—back. . . . That's right—you better—kill—me!”

Uncouth, horrid sounds. . . .

Hawthorne rose in the darkness, panting over the groveling form.

“They've gone!” he said, and plunged blindly toward the barn.

CHAPTER XVII

CANST HEAR ME?

“And now thy face grows dim apace
And seems of yon white foam a part.
Canst hear me through the water bass
Cry: ‘To the shore, Sweetheart?’”

As he flung open the door out of the dark warmth the Admiral whinnied sociably. The lantern first! Still breathing hard, Hawthorne struck match after match. In a far corner he found the lantern. It would have been easier to light it with steadier hands! But his brain worked clear and lightning-like. By the faint rays finally kindled he flung saddle and bridle on to the startled horse. Another search for the whip, never important before, and he galloped into the quiet yard.

Before there had been only low, thick tones in the night. Now, the Admiral circling, he

shouted loudly for Blake and Bone. Almost instantly with gasps of astonishment they took orders from the man on the dancing horse. In ten words he explained, then:

“Run to the Beach with ropes, a plank, blankets, the lantern. Don’t walk,—run!”

And wheeling, the Admiral galloped out of the yard.

It was still a sweet warm starless night in Deep Bottom. And now a man was riding desperately in the darkness on a big sure-footed horse. The bridle rein hung untouched. For the Admiral best knew the way. His hoofbeats thudded steadily and bravely, eating up the yards. They plunged into mossy glades where the scent of broken ferns floated upward. They crackled on fallen boughs in the groves, and the man must bend and defend himself from branches. They rattled over the stones of a brook that burbled gently by itself to show it was not lonely, pounded out into open spaces under the shrouded sky. They began to eat up the miles. And without once touching the reins the man leaned to their rhythm.

Hawthorne had not been present at the second opening of the Beach, having remembered too well the first. He had expected Brant to stop and report in regard to the catch of herring, but the half-breed had paused only a moment at the gate of the farm house, long enough to warn William Blake about the channel. The making of a wide cut in the Beach after the heavy rainfall—a thing the Islanders had always planned to do sometime—had had the inevitable result, foreseen by Hawthorne. From the swollen pond there was a current strong enough to sweep an unguarded boat into the sea. . . . And the usual landing-place, on the pond side of the Beach, was, as the half-breed well knew, at the very mouth of the opening.

Brant! . . . A long, salt wind, like a sigh, drew through Deep Bottom. The Indian stoniness, then, had turned at last into the molten red stream, bringing swift disaster. . . . A few drops of rain fell. They stung on Miles Hawthorne's forehead. He raised his face and wondered that he had not killed the man back there in the dark.

Through another murmuring grove, where the sheep, disturbed for the second time, huddled by the roadside with soft movements and complaints, out into a wide clearing, the Admiral's hoofs battered. This, his rider rightly guessed, was Cæsar's Field. The hand clutched in the horse's mane loosened a moment and drew the coarse flying hair through the fingers. There she had hidden her face, this very night. . . .

She belonged to him! There was no thought, now, of a mere accident on the *Alaska*. Essentials stood out. He saw, distinctly, that that was not one. A broken career—this was an incident, if the spirit remain whole. He should have taken her, no matter what stood in the way. He should have taken her—tonight. Now. . . .

But the first thing was to save her! If the dory had ridden the surf and had been kept off the coast, it might be done. For the light wind, thank God, was from the south, though the tide had been going out for three hours. Three hours!

Galloping in the dark, the Admiral brought him to the place which he knew, somehow, was where they had met today. The horse remembered, shying slightly by the bushes in whose shadow she had sat. She had risen from the very earth, startling them both,—making certain resolutions hard to keep. The place recalled the song that had run in his head. The hideous accident of it! The hoof-beats pounded it out:

“Canst hear me through the water bass?” . . .

They toiled up a slope. And here her hand stole out—ah, he knew why—and rested on his shoulder. . . . A few more warm drops fell. They hurt. It must not, must not rain!

Suddenly the Admiral stopped with a plunge and a snort. The bars! He leaped down, and in the darkness without much difficulty lowered them, leading the excited horse through. “I will see you tomorrow,” he had said to her here. What would have happened—by tomorrow? . . .

Arriving at the first telephone—it was in the house where he had borrowed an oilskin the

night of the thunder-storm—he battered on the door. A few words sufficed.

“A boat . . . the cut in the Beach. Where’s your telephone?”

A slow trembling old woman made a light.

“Lord of love!” she quavered. “Lord of love! It’s never her, sir! Why, she set on my steps this mornin’ an’ shelled our peas fer dinner!”

The little family gathered, pale and quiet. Hawthorne, with the usual difficulty, roused the one sleepy telephone operator and called up Captain Madison first. He wasted no words. In short crisp sentences he outlined his plan. It was to put out from Woodstock, half-way between Bridgewater and Great Cliffs, in the porgy boat of the Captain’s son, which by accident he knew to be anchored there; but first telephone every man who owned a sea-going boat between Bridgewater and the Cliffs to do the same,—there were not many, for launching was rarely possible; and to notify the Great Cliffs life-saving station. He named the men whom he would call while the

Captain was dressing. The skipper would take the others.

The quiet orders went on in the little room, while the old woman wept silently.

"Give me Captain Seavey. You'll have to take the name. Then take this name and I'll give you the next number! Look up Jotham Torrey, Mrs. Fielding, please. Here's the book. Try to be quick. . . . Hello! Captain Seavey? . . ."

As the old woman fumbled a girl rushed from her bedroom adjoining, and snatched the book.

"Give it to me, Grandmother!"

She found the numbers nimbly, crouching big-eyed by the instrument. The grandmother crimped the red table cloth with withered hands.

"She shelled the peas," she whimpered.

His errand finished, the rescue organized, Hawthorne ran out of the little house that perched on the rim of the hollow. A tiny boy was holding the tall stamping horse. The girl followed him and thrust the whip into his hands. He had left it on the table.

"Good children!" he said.

"Will you take a lantern?" asked the girl. She held up one she had lighted.

"She cured my rabbit's leg," sobbed the little boy.

"She cures everybody!" said Miles Hawthorne. And striking the Admiral for the first time with the whip dashed down the sandy road.

"*"Good children!"*" whispered the girl. "He didn't take my lantern, Grandmother. . . ."

And on the way through Bijah's Cove the Admiral's rider was hearing, now, in the hoof-beats the ejaculation of the old woman, "Lord of love!"

Was there a Lord of love? And where was He tonight? . . .

He had dreaded this—passing the house and the garden. Why it was that the acre of red geraniums had meant what it did he did not know. But what he had told June was true. And he had never needed that mantle of courage as he needed it tonight. There was a light in the house. For one wild moment he thought she might have come back. Then Hannah's

voice by the roadside startled both horse and man.

"It's me! Where is she? What's happened? Oh, my God!"

For a second he pulled in the horse.

"I'm going to find her, Hannah. . . . Don't cry so!"

"I asked them not to go so late on this dark night!"

Again Miles Hawthorne wound his hand in the horse's mane as he galloped on, seeking to dull the stab. She asked *them!* For the first time the other man seemed real. . . .

Through Bridgewater the Admiral flew, kicking sparks. Men were awake. Lanterns bobbed. A door slammed. The Islanders could act quickly. . . .

In a lighted upper room a child was crying, and Hawthorne wondered if it were sick, and if so what was the matter with it. He had once seen her take a village child into her arms. It had been hurt by a fall, but stopped crying when she held it. She would know how to make this child stop crying. She knew. . . .

Past the mill-pond, around the sharp curve, by the house supposed to be haunted, the great horse clattered. A man running in the road shouted:

“God go wi’ ye!”

Then at a whispered word the Admiral lay back his ears and stretched down the Great Cliffs road.

Captain Madison lived half-way to Woodstock, from which the porgy boat was to put out. And toward the end of his long dark ride Hawthorne passed him in the old buggy. He could never mistake the flop, flop of Sally’s feet, hurried tonight. Shouting that they would be ready to put out by the time the skipper reached his son’s boat, he did not wait for an answer. But he could hear the unwonted whip upon the beloved back. That was answer enough. Urging his brave horse on in the sweet-smelling night, he believed that he had begun to pray that the wind would not change; and wondered if he were a little mad that the fragrance in the air was that of geraniums.

Then at last, in the soft darkness, the rain came.

CHAPTER XVIII

A RED GERANIUM

It was two o'clock, so quickly had it all happened, when they put out in a panting little porgy boat. The rain fell gently as they made the last preparations. The swift and silent Islanders—for those who daily draw close to the terror of Nature are silent and swift—did not know how near it came to unnerving the man from off-island who worked as rapidly and quietly. They carried out his plan and took his brief orders—Young Seavey, Joth Torrey, and the older men—seeing only in the lantern flashes his set jaw and face, and on the forehead the scar standing out, livid. He went aboard the boat last, after receiving word from the life-saving station that Captain Jasper was out in the motor life-boat. The Islanders were silent by nature, but something else made them

so tonight. They were appalled with the thought that once again the South Beach seemed about to take toll.

Captain Madison was in command and they steered for Great Cliffs. The hope of all was that either the man or the girl had known enough to row in that direction. To keep away from the surf on the shelving coast, and yet not be carried out too far into the open sea where ordinary waves might swamp the slight dory and the chance of rescue was lessened,—that was their problem. For no harbor is on the lonely south shore—Jem Madison's porgy boat rode here temporarily at anchor—and the Island children can tell you that when you look southward the first land is Bermuda. So Captain Madison steered for the Cliffs, and no one spoke of what might have happened hours ago in the meeting of the current and the breakers, or for what Blake and the negro kept lonely watch on the Beach.

Other boats were out now. As the rusty little tub kicked off shore and shouldered the

long swell two lights appeared, venturing far. They were Captain Seavey's and Henry Pelham Poole's, according to Joth Torrey, who had ridden madly on the trail of Hawthorne from Bridgewater to Woodstock, determined to be in the naval officer's party. All was being done that could be done. So far relief had lain in action. Now the night stretched ahead—blank uncertainty.

"We'll find her, boy," Captain Madison rumbled over and over again. Not once had he said, "We'll find *them*."

The rain continued, so soft that it made no sound on the slippery deck. By the light of the lanterns it glistened on the oilskins of the Captain and his son, and it fell on the bare head of the man who tramped the deck, or stood in silence at the dipping prow. There was no searchlight on the porgy boat. They had to content themselves with swinging lanterns in the hope that these would be seen from the water. And every ten minutes the engine was stopped that a call for help might not be lost in its fuming.

At last Hawthorne sat down, resting his head in his hands, as he waited. Drenching agony, swamping his very soul, tossed all things in wild confusion, so that he grasped first at one and then at another, only to recoil. The naked truth that she was gone, out into this vast, dark, awful space with all her gentle gaiety,—that seemed more than the human spirit could endure. For with inaction came the end of hope. Once more Something deadly had reached, and snatched. So that underneath this whirlwind of suffering he knew, with stabbing sanity, there lay a dropping void of desolation to be explored. . . .

But with and in spite of this, clear, hard, little thoughts ground themselves into a very diamond dust in his brain and scattered cuttingly. Hannah's actions? The letter that came the night they had supper together? Her problem? His invitation to Atherton,—why did she not say she had been there? . . . Then a rage at his own disloyalty in doubting. A swift, sharp memory of the beauty of her smile. . . . And all this suddenly blotted out

with the knowledge that she was not alone—out there; that she had left him, forbidding him to follow, with no word of the man about whom all knew, except him. Who was he—who had kissed her first? At last a descent into that desolation, where things took one by the throat, and there was no fight left in a man any more. . . .

In an unending circle the agony went on. Was this the fearsomeness of love that kind old man had talked of? Was he to have that, with never a touch of the fairness? He had stretched out his hand once, and held back through pride and honor. But it was beyond his reach all the time. . . . What a sharp, wild mixture of beauty and terror in life!

More diamond-chip thoughts, a clear chain. . . . No one suspected the half-breed; and he had not told. There was horrible irony in the fact that the thing had been done for him! He had known before of strange acts of this man. He had seen him on the Beach alone; and once had found him digging there—for the buried treasure? But this was beyond all belief, until

one remembered that Shamawna had borne a son. And he had himself said they were safe with Shamawna's people! . . .

Then—terrible union of joy and suffering—for a flying moment in the shadowy ghost of a garden, he held her in his arms once more—all the memory he had. . . .

So it went on, in a wheeling succession. Suddenly someone stood before him, a lantern making a circle of light on the deck. With an enormous effort he looked up dizzily, recalling that he was strangely at sea, going out in the night to her. . . . Joth Torrey's voice, gruff and shaky, spoke with hesitation.

"She came to see my little brother," he was saying, without introduction. "He's got something the matter with his side. She showed my mother how to make him comfortable. Jerry tells us every day how he loves her. He says he's going to marry her when he grows up. He—don't know he won't grow up."

These things that they said about her, telling him as if he had a right to know! They had, sometimes, a kindness that killed. . . .

There was so much to do, she had said to him once, that perhaps she ought not to have a garden. She little knew how wide and sweet her garden was!

"I should like to know Jerry, too," he said, wondering that his voice sounded so natural.

Joth Torrey cleared his throat and blew his nose.

"I can tell you something else."

"Yes?"

"I've found out where the flowers go, all them red geraniums."

But Hawthorne grasped the tall youth's arm.

"Don't! I should rather not hear it."

"Oh, all right."

"She's never told me herself. I can—wait—"

The porgy boat rolled in a ground swell that spoke of a gale far at sea. The night stretched on and on. One had never done anything but wait in the wet blackness, wait and listen. After a hundred hours it stopped raining. That was a relief. By and by it

seemed another hundred since it had rained. Still there was no dawn. The wind was shifting ever so little, and rising. A stiff land breeze would blow the dory beyond their aid. . . .

Captain Madison stopped beside him often. Sometimes Hawthorne looked up and they spoke. Sometimes they did not need words. Only once the younger man came near the edge of things.

"For God's sake give me something to do!" he said.

This was after he had heard Young Seavey and Joth Torrey exchange guarded comments, in voices not quite low enough.

"He don't know," said Torrey. "Damn it, I wish I didn't!"

He seemed always to have been swinging a lantern. . . . A series of clear images came now. He saw her in every phase since that first day on the Beach; he saw her eyes with the shining lights in them, her grave and laughing face. She looked up at him from the mahogany rocker at Long Point Farm. She was gay and wind-blown in the *Sitka*. She

stood in the midst of her scarlet garden, offering him one blossom, always the fullest and sweetest she had. And her voice came, clear and real, with all the varied notes in that harmony of tenderness. Her voice—telling him, as she did sometimes, about birds in tree-tops; and tiny flowers he would have trodden upon; and about the vanished stars. Then he felt, and shook under the touch, her hand upon his arm, as she had put it there, just twice, in time to save him from a pitfall. . . .

It was not yet light at half past four. Captain Madison said they were nearing the enormous headland whose towering presence loomed no less appalling because invisible. By the tone in his voice Hawthorne knew that the skipper had hoped to pick up the dory before now!

This time the engine was silent longer than usual. The breeze sprang up again, with steady persistence, from the shore. The firefly lanterns rose and fell forlornly.

He stood at the rail, walled in by the darkness. With action everything had fallen away

but the sense of her helplessness. He felt as if he could cleave this black space and reach her somehow, far out there. She belonged to him, because he had seen—more clearly than anyone else!—the beauty in her that linked her with universal Beauty. He did not know whether she were living or dead, but she was there, and he leaned to her, with a sense of meeting. . . .

Then, in that lapping stillness, he heard from the south a faint cry. Had the night turned him a little mad that he had come to this—to hearing voices? The strained figures about him did not relax. It had not, then, reached them.

It came again! But whether it were real or a voice in a dream, he could not tell for the joy of hearing it. . . . Far and very faint, he knew it for her voice—calling.

The figures about him were moving rapidly now. There were shouts in the darkness, and tossing lights. Had they, then, heard the voice, too, and thought it real? He looked at them in amazement. Then a heavy hand fell

on his shoulder, and Captain Madison sent back a great answering call.

She lived! He had found her.

The night seemed to turn very cold. This was an undreamed torture—a black, cold hell! For there was the dory to be faced! And more waiting in all that cold. . . . He did not hear what was said around him. He knew only that she was near, and coming nearer now; that others would see her first; that somehow he must face her, and the one who was with her. He heard oars in the water. And all at once it seemed horribly funny that this was the little blue dory that had sidled under the nose of the *Sitka*, in some other world.

Then at last, when the oars came close, he heard her speak across the water, heard her say something low and clear and comforting to the man who was with her! He could not make out the boat.

And instantly as her voice, with that exquisite tone, dropped into the darkness, the—*thing*—came again, rushing over him, astounding and stifling in the black damp, so that he

gripped the rail and let the lantern fall hissing into the sea,—the ghastly sensation he had known once before, at their first meeting, and almost forgotten! Nothing was wanting now in this mad night! It came in the hot thick odor of ether, that dropped out of chaos smotheringly, and surrounded him in an even thicker darkness—an unknown region he had once explored. It came in living remembrance of blind pain and horror. . . .

And now he was not mad at all, but beautifully sane, and somehow omniscient. Long-buried knowledge rose to the surface in bubbles and burst into realization. . . . He knew, again, that he had tried very hard to lie still on the hospital bed—even to talk of something else to the one who had come, light and calm, to get him ready for the newest ordeal. He had tried to say, naturally, to the figure he had felt so near him: “You’ve got a geranium on?”

Then it had happened,—the human touch that upbore. She had answered, gently: “A red geranium,” and put it into his hand!

Her voice! . . .

That certainty rose. It had been she—though he had never seen her—who came in the time of a man's trouble, and vanished. One touch, one tone, and she was gone. But the ghost of her beauty—not for the eyes to see—remained to haunt one. So disembodied a soul it was that he had even deemed it a part of the All-Beautiful, the All-Good!

The meaning of a thousand things lay in this revelation, that came when her voice spoke, comfortingly, in the dark. They crowded greedily, demanding to be taken together into the mind. They made all clear.

Very clear!

For, just once when he was getting a little better, he had asked someone about the surgical nurse who came with the specialist. . . . But hadn't her name been Carter? . . . She was a specialist, too, almost as famous as he in her own way. All she did was to assist him in operating. She came before him and remained—a little while—behind.

"Yes," he was told, "it is so interesting. She is engaged to marry the surgeon. We

think he worships her skill. It is a fine thing for her to marry such a very great man. . . .”

Very clear indeed! And perfectly sane!

For the man in the boat with her now was the one who had saved him from blindness.

He clung to the rail. . . .

Captain Madison helped her over the side of the porgy boat.

“Th—thank you,” he heard her saying, “dear Captain Madison! I knew you would come. And—and you must meet Dr. Kimball—you—you really must meet Dr. Kimball—I—want you—to—meet—” and she slipped quietly down in a heap on the deck.

It was Miles Hawthorne who picked her up.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BEAUTIFUL WORLD

THE Geranium Lady lay on the couch in the sitting-room of the Betty Latch Cottage. It was again sunset. Only the next one since she had played the part of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," though it seemed impossible that last night they were in Cæsar's Field together and she rode the Admiral, while Hawthorne walked by her side. The lattices stood open, the window-sills all gay with geraniums in little pots. Outside, it seemed to the man who sat near her, was an acre of scarlet velvet.

She had rested and slept all day. She would come to no harm. She was safe! Dr. Kimball had said so and gone.

Miles Hawthorne had ridden the Admiral slowly up from Long Point in the late afternoon. He knew, of course, that Warrington Kimball

had stayed to care for her. And he knew that he could do nothing himself. Neither did he wish very much to go to the Betty Latch Cottage. But he owed them both a great debt. It was right to call and make sure all was well.

He had found the doctor just leaving. So that was the stern kind face that every day, for someone, defied death, and worse. Yet somehow it was not incongruous that the Geranium Lady should call him "Tony." He was a mere man today, not the great surgeon.

He wrung Hawthorne's hand, and in a few words thanked him for his part in the rescue.

"Someone had to do it," said the man from the *Alaska*, simply.

"That must be a watchword of yours, sir," remarked Dr. Kimball. "I seem to have heard it before."

And for the first time the Geranium Lady saw Miles Hawthorne flush.

He turned quickly away as the doctor held out his hand to June. Without knowing just how he got there he found himself in Hannah's

kitchen, leaning against the closed door, rather breathless. "Good-bye, Tony," he had heard her say.

Hannah was wiping dishes. She did not seem startled at his sudden invasion. Her air of being forearmed against surprise attacks had returned. But she was softened.

"Hello!" she remarked. She had never stood in awe of Hawthorne, as, with all their affection, the Islanders did.

"May I stay here for a few minutes, Hannah?"

"Sure you can. Anything you want in this house is yours."

"That's a pretty extravagant offer, isn't it?"

Hannah polished a blue plate. She certainly was softened. Something gleamed in her eyes.

"Not accordin' to my way of thinkin', it ain't."

He continued to lean against the door. There was a low murmur from the living-room.

"By the way, I have an apology to offer you,

Hannah," he said. "You see, I've been completely misunderstanding you. I have rather resented things. But you did perfectly right. You have taken wonderful care of—your mistress. I haven't any—claim—but I feel like thanking you."

Another blue plate was receiving violent friction.

"You can thank me," said the woman. "I don't mind a bit!"

"You see," Hawthorne smiled a little, "I've heard about—Calcutta, and the rest. Though I don't know, after all, that you deserve so much credit for following Miss Carver."

The third blue plate was set down with a clatter. Then something astonishing happened. First Hannah rolled down her sleeves and, being feminine, patted her hair. Then she walked up to the tall man by the door, and kissed him on the cheek!

"We'll call that my thanks," she remarked calmly, in no wise disconcerted. "Now get along with you! Your place ain't here. Go an' talk with her. I'll warrant he's gone."

And she pulled her one-time enemy away from the door, opened it, and with a pat, pushed him through. . . .

The Geranium Lady lay on the couch, and outside the sun glowed beneficently on the garden, and Dr. Kimball had gone away. She wore something all lacy and frilly white, tied with a gay red ribbon. Her two long, black, fluffy braids snuggled at her sides. In her beautiful eyes dwelt the strangest look. They were both sad and happy.

She stirred on the couch comfortably.

"I'm glad to be here!" she told him—lightly. "And since someone had to do it, I'm glad it was you."

He sat not very near her. One might surely be glad, knowing she was safe! He turned the pages of her magazines on the table, in a way he had, and watched the sun on her hands. And their sense of companionship that could not be killed grew fair and strong, until their eyes met in a grave smile. . . . But he looked away from her quickly, dropped a magazine, and in replacing it knocked over her medicine.

As he ruefully tried to repair the damage she hid her face in the pillow.

"Oh, please, please, don't mind!" she said. "It is foolish of me to take any."

"There's just one spoonful left," he announced, successfully careless. "You must have it now before anything happens to that! Open your mouth!"

He poured out the medicine and approached with the spoon in the air.

"Open it!" he laughed down at her. "Silly!"

She obeyed, and he did not spill a drop.

"You couldn't do it better—yourself," he remarked. Then he turned his back and threw the bottle into the fireplace. His hand shook a little now that there was no reason why it should not. When he sat down again she was looking out of the window. Her eyes shone softly. He did not dream that he himself had made them glow so, with that courageous laugh. And when she turned to him again the two rose spots had bloomed. She looked at him keenly, but he let his remark drop, as if it were entirely insignificant.

He sat down again, quietly, about two yards away. He found it hard to talk. Tonight there were no stories of Island traditions. This was his last visit at the Betty Latch Cottage—

By and by she marveled that Jim Brant had missed them, for that was the interpretation Hawthorne had not contradicted. And he did not tell her about the man in whose veins ran the fire of two fierce races, and the aspiration of one. He exquisitely understood the half-breed, but he hoped he would never see him again. He had received at Long Point Farm a note from Jim Brant which he had risked letting William Blake read. It said: "Captain Hawthorne sir, i have gone off island, it is the same as if you had not save her, good bye." The cramped lines were unsigned. William Blake's eyes had flashed, but he had said nothing. The secretary was again colorless and discreet. Whatever he guessed he would not tell. And very soon he, too, was going off-island, to marry Rose. That had been decided, it seemed, in last night's ghastly

watch on the Beach. Lieutenant Hawthorne would have to find another secretary.

But of all this he said nothing. He agreed that it was strange that Jim Brant had missed them.

There was nothing to do but sit here beside her for a little while, and then go away. They had not once mentioned Warrington Kimball. It seemed as if they were not going to. Perhaps it might have been a little kinder of her to explain that she loved the doctor very much.

"A red geranium," was what she had said to him once, helping him pretend he was not afraid of the dark. The sun slanted, gorgeous, on the acre of scarlet velvet—her garden! What was it she had said in this room? Her work was too scientific for her heart, that was it; suddenly she couldn't bear it!

It might be as well to go now.

A long shaft of the sun had shot through the window and fallen across her face. He rose and lowered the shade a little.

"Is that better?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you."

He stood beside the couch. She seemed very far away.

"You must be tired. So I'm going. . . . I want to say how much I thank you for—everything. And, oh yes, you may be interested to know—that I shall not buy Long Point Farm."

He looked down at her dim face.

"Good-bye!" he added. Moisture stood in a line above his lips, but he was quite steady. "Good-bye," he said again, to show that he could.

Fingering a long, black braid of her hair, she said gently:

"I want to tell you why he went away so sadly. He is such a good, great man."

He bent nearer to watch her beautiful mouth. He could not help it. It curved so tenderly.

"He is never coming back," she said at last. "That is why he went away so sadly. Do you understand?"

He sat down beside her on the edge of the old couch. He could not help that, either. But he did not answer her question.

"June!"

Whirling chaos again, as on the boat, but this time full of lights, shot through with a blast of rising music. It seemed as if her name should have been chanted.

"June. . . . I knew last night."

"You knew?"

"When I heard your voice, in the dark."

"I thought," she said, looking up, "you would never remember!"

The lights widened. The music soared. Into it her voice was woven, saying low:

"You were so—plucky. . . . I—I want you to know"—her eyes were exquisite, but her breath was coming short—"I worked—very—hard—"

There was no more chaos, but a great whiteness, and the music was a crashing of waters in perfect harmony. He raised her ministering hands, and kissed them. Then drawing her upward, he held her close in his arms. She yielded, [trembling. With one free hand she softly touched his forehead.

No dream of joy was like this joy. . . .

He did not go away. He stayed close be-

side her, still holding those wonderful hands. And they told each other everything.

"You see," she said, looking up after a time earnestly as she explained the "problem"—her eyes never left his face now—"he has always done so much! He made my career. He—he loves me! I supposed—once—that I loved him."

"Skill is—worshipful," he told her.

"I first asked him to let me go—when I came to the Island. I said I needed to rest. . . . It is hard, you know, seeing people suffer. . . . I didn't dream—you—were here! I only thought I'd like to go to a place where I'd been—a little girl. And—and I always loved—red geraniums."

"Where was it that day?" asked Miles Hawthorne suddenly.

"In my hair."

He lifted one of the black braids.

"I didn't tell you, at first, that I was 'engaged'—because I expected not to be. Besides, I wanted you to remember. It seemed hopeless,—impossible, but I thought you

might. Don't you see, if I'd told you about—Dr. Kimball—it would have spoiled that?"

"I see. June—is this why you thought I might despise you?" he smiled.

"There really wasn't very much to remember."

The sun shone red on their hands, and he saw that she smiled down at them with trembling lips. He did not know why. Of course it had happened, that is, the thing that was only a man's plain duty and about which it was distressing to have people say the things they did—the thing that was, after all, an essential because it had brought them together, had happened at sunset. But she could not know that. . . . He was unaware that she in her turn was remembering something. (Oh, she had always known so much about him!) Something, it was, that he had said when he was coming out of the ether, the same words he had used before, they had told her, when he lay on the battleship's deck, scorched and blinded. He had laughed, even then, and said: "This is too bright a light to last! I thought it was sunset! . . ."

She laid her hand over his.

"But he wouldn't let me go!" she went on by-and-by. "He talked of ungratefulness. That hurt! And then, how could I tell you, after not telling you at first? It meant explaining everything—how I'd changed my mind about him, and why. It kept getting harder. He talked about marriage—soon. But I knew I should never, never marry him. That kept me silent. It was horribly mixed up! And all the time absurdly I wanted you to remember I'd been with you, then; that I knew,—oh, down to the very dregs. . . . What you said about the garden came the nearest."

He had not told her, yet, about the half memory on the Beach at the time of their first Island meeting.

"Then," she held his hand tighter, "he was called down to see Mr. Mildmay, in Atherton. And I went over,—to continue our argument. He found he had to operate, and he wanted me to help, because he thinks foolish things about my—help. I couldn't refuse. So when he came back I went over and did what I could.

It happened that the time was ripe during the storm. You didn't come up till it was over, so—you didn't miss me. And when you did come, I—still I couldn't tell. . . . But I should have, dear, very soon! I sent Mr. Mildmay a roomful of geraniums. He liked them—too."

"And who else did, besides me?"

"It was a big hospital, you remember. I have been sending them to—to the others. A good many are children, you know. . . ."

"If I had gone upstairs, that day, I should have seen them!" continued Miles Hawthorne.

"He received me on the veranda."

"I knew that you went," June whispered. "I loved—your going. . . ."

"I tried hard to be true to Tony," she went on later. "I'm so very—fond of him. But you have to be true to yourself! And circumstance so often stands in the way. You can't live on respect and gratitude. Isn't it funny? You just can't! And he wouldn't understand."

"He couldn't, June. It's hard—getting on without things—"

"He wouldn't see. Until—last—night. . . ."

It was so—dark. The boat was—so—small. We were very unimportant—out there. We talked together. And he said he would give me up—whatever happened. And—then—the wind came. . . .”

She had not spoken before of the fearful experience of the night, and she said no more now. But it was difficult to bear the long shudder that went through her.

As they talked the twilight dropped its gray veil between them. Though used to it now, he felt the sharp forlorn need of her reassuring voice and touch. Kneeling, he held her like a child on his arm.

“I tried hard to be brave,” she said simply, with a little quivering of the lips. “I tried to be like you.”

“Hush, dear.”

“I remembered what you said about the garden, and that helped.”

She never even dreamed, he knew, what her garden really was! And he had no words in which to tell her. He only held her safe in the deepening twilight.

"It is a dear kind world, isn't it?" she said, with her cheek against him. "And so *beautiful*!"

"Yes, June!"

"Time is so comfortingly large; time for work, and for gardens."

"If not one work," he said, "why then another."

She stroked his cheek.

"And so many stories end well! . . ."

By-and-by he recalled that an essential detail had not been mentioned.

"I love you," he told her.

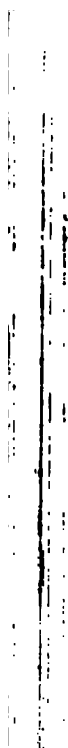
Smiling in the dusk she reached up to the lattice window and broke off a sweet dark blossom from the plant in the little pot.

"It is a red geranium, dear," she said, and put it into his hand.

END

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